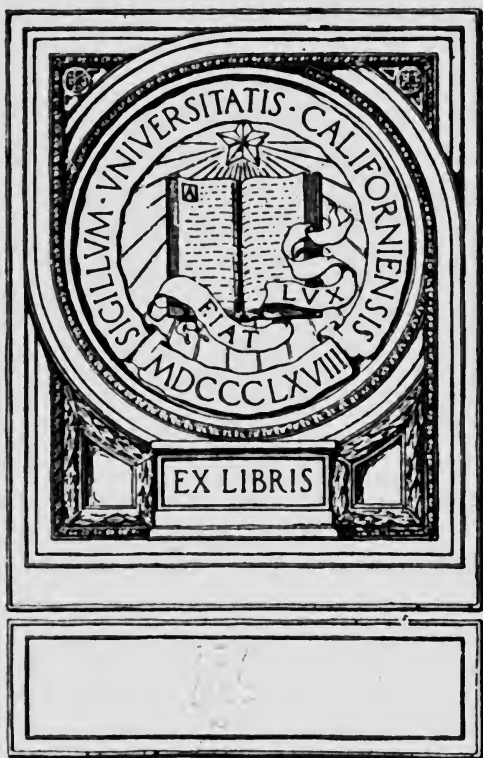


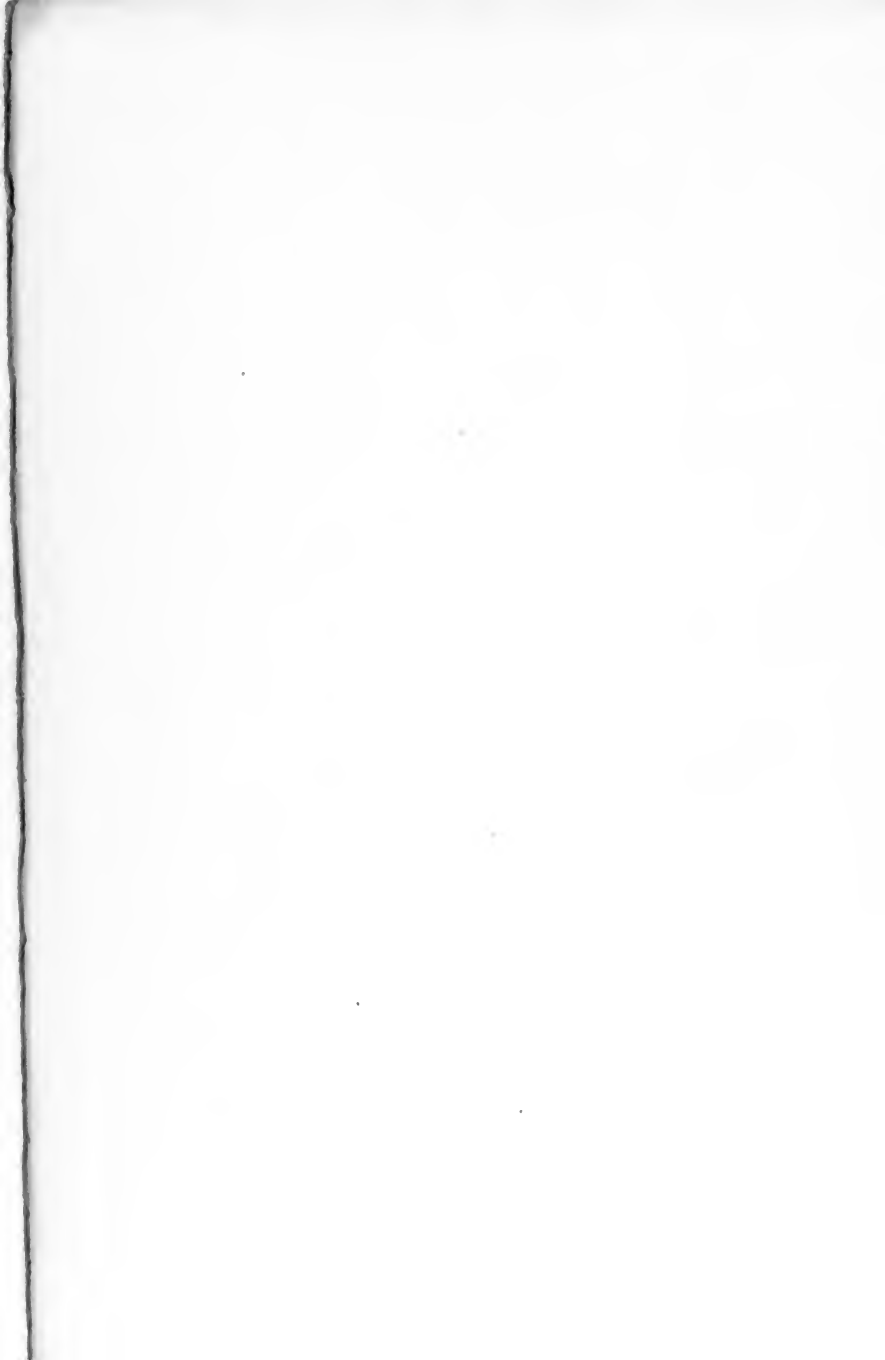
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# **PROCESSIONALS**



# PROCESSIONALS

By

JOHN CURTIS UNDERWOOD

*"For the mind of man is marching past  
perdition through the night"*



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## FOREWORD

Leading the long procession through the midnight,  
Man that was ether, fire, sea, germ and ape,  
Out of the æons blind of slime emerging,  
Out of the æons black when will went groping,  
Finding the fire, was fused to human shape.

Heading the dreary marches through dark ages;  
Where the rest perished that the rest might be,  
Out of the æons raw and red of bloodshed,  
Man that was caveman, found the stars. Forever  
Man to the stars goes marching from the sea.

Man that was caveman mounts, and makes, and measures,  
Atoms and oceans rules. And to his will  
Storms and the stars pay tribute. All we bring thee,  
To thy last altar Life, today. Adoring  
To our last breath we lift our living still.

All that we learned and loved we bring and bless thee;  
All of our toils and tears to pay thy price.  
All of our sins and shames are thine. Forever  
Man that was slave goes marching forth to freedom,  
Till his last triumph turns to sacrifice.

*Peconic, 9-25-14*



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# *COSMICS*



## LES FORTS

WE were spawned in lava mountains. From the surf  
line of the sea,

We were cast on desert islands when the world began to  
be.

Rocks were hard to make us harder. Storms were strong  
to make us strong.

And our will was set and tempered where the frosts  
were sore and long.

Glaciers drove us. We retreated till we overtopped the  
snow.

Past the passes pierced the mountains: found the valleys  
warm below.

We went marching past perdition with a purpose ill  
conceived

Till we made us gods of granite, and a Law that we  
believed.

Then we made us camps and cities, for our cattle, for  
our wives.

And we found us gold and silver, and we purchased  
power with lives.

And we made us ships and seamen. Master craftsmen  
we became.

And we wrought us arts and letters; blew a bubble that  
was fame.

And our strength became our weakness. We were wasted  
in the night.  
And we lost the stars in lewdness that blasphemed all  
law and light.  
And we bred us filth and fevers till our children were  
as slaves  
In the streets of dying cities, and our gods we laid in  
graves.

Still we lusted for the open, for the sea, and for the  
sun.  
There we marveled at the mountains and the deeds that  
men have done.  
There we sought a Voice, a Vision; till our doctors of  
disease  
Out of travail pangs of ages brought to birth a Soul  
that sees:

Made a mind that masters slowly want and weakness,  
storm and time:  
Wrests her secrets from the midnight; fills all space with  
rhythm and rhyme:  
Tears the rotting veils of vision from its Truth it dares  
to face:  
Sees in man his own salvation, finds in fear its last dis-  
grace:

Binds new burdens on the strong, and sets them sterner  
handicaps;

Spends their strength in ceaseless striving till they meet  
the great Perhaps;

Lends itself to lift the fallen in its last crusade of light.

*For the mind of man is marching past perdition through  
the night.*

*Marseilles, 5-21-14*

## THE WEAK

**W**E were born of night and terror in a wilderness of fear.

We were made to be your burdens till your tyrants disappear.

Hatred, greed, despair, for ages were our grandams and our sires:

We were mangled in the mountains, ringed around with frosts and fires.

Starving men begat in horror our forerunners weak as we.

Sickly mothers gave us suck. We lost our brothers in the sea.

We were seized and we were shaken by a million mouths of pain.

We were trapped and we were taken, and in torment we were slain.

We were slaves to lusts that slew us slowly. We were slaves to toil.

Chain gangs marched across the meadows. Rotting figs and rancid oil

Were our rations. We went naked in the galleys, in the sun.

We were slaves to lies that slew us slowly, surely, one by one.



Slaves to gods debased, like devils in our masters' coward  
minds;  
Old traditions, superstitions, idols born of prayer that  
blinds;  
Creeds as cruel as their quenchless hell; the scapegoats of  
their sins.  
Making of its fears a fetish, slowly life to freedom wins.

We are slaves that snap their fetters, one by one, and  
year by year.  
We come stumbling from our dungeons till the sun and  
stars appear.  
Weary, wounded, falling, dying, in your streets of lies  
obscene,  
We go groping through the shadows to a land where  
life is clean.

Little children in your mills, and babies butchered in  
your streets,  
Men in mines you doom to darkness; women, life's last  
vile defeats,  
Lawyers, liars, scribes and teachers who a nation's soul  
betray;  
Perjured priests and healers, slowly stumbling toward the  
light of day.

So we have defiled for ages out of darkness. Now we  
see

New salvation made for millions, nearer. So our thoughts  
go free.

Year by year you cure our bodies; teach our rotting souls  
to know

Will, that mind shall make immortal, life's last fear shall  
overthrow.

We were weak to make you stronger. Like your children  
we shall grow.

*Peconic, 5-31-14*

## ARCHANGELS

**B**Y the bones that fell before them they were blooded  
to the trail,

By the ghosts that dared the desert, dying they have  
grasped the grail.

Like the substance lost of corals slowly risen from the  
sea,

By the faith that failed and faltered we were fitted to  
be free.

By a star that's dead two thousand year, you steer across  
the night.

By the force of fallen waters I am switching on the  
light

In my study that's a temple and a treasure house of  
souls,

Where the strongest still are silent in the shadows of  
their goals.

Standing armies, rank on rank of truth eternal. Round  
the walls,

Round the shelves a light unearthly, sprayed like radium,  
lifts and falls.

There they stand in silent test tubes charged with  
chemicals of thought,

Elements of life, its cultures, out of chaos slowly wrought,  
Force that's free from flesh forever, cells of one immortal  
Mind;

Man that forth from night and ether, word by word his  
faith defined.

Word by word — the apes have chattered — word by word  
of fraud and fear,

From the shamans, from the sibyls, from the priests we  
had to hear.

Year by year we broke their idols, broke their shackles,  
fought the shades;

Fought with beasts in light's arena, every lie that life  
degrades.

Blow by blow we rent the barriers, step by step more near  
we trod

To the threshold of tomorrow and the secrets gray of  
God.

Word by word we wrote our gospels, line by line our  
letters set,

Lost illusions, loves and lustings, forced the feeble to  
forget:

Found a force that growing stronger still than atom, germ  
or star;

Cringing once in shame to shadows, stands that truth  
whose thoughts we are.

Here its shrine and here its powerhouse waits till all our  
lines are laid,

Dynamos and coils connected, through a world that sick,  
afraid,  
Shaken with the crash of churches, dumb with anguish  
longs to see  
Sunlight in its shameful places. Here our surgeons set  
you free,  
Snap your shackles. Thought forever and the work of  
thought alone,  
Earth outliving, serve the Highest; soar adoring round  
the throne.

*S.S. Chicago, 4-16-13*

## *THE SUMMIT*

**W**E went climbing in the morning from the valleys,  
from the cities black of men.

Something called us to the sky line, for the sky larks  
soared, the light was lifting then.

We went climbing in the sunshine. We went singing.  
We went rivaling the sun.

But our singing ceased, our throats were choked, our  
breath was battling long before the day was done.

We went climbing from the shore line, from the shallows,  
the unsounded depths of sea,

Where the corals, the crustaceans, the sea lizards, all our  
crawling life began to be.

We went climbing through the shadows, through the  
jungles, where the tiger and the ape

Lurked and lingered, watched and hungered, crawling,  
crouching, lest our stragglers should escape.

We went climbing past the caves where first our fathers  
lit their fire.

Fallen embers from their altars, hopeless hungers, flaming  
horrors, nursed the flame of our desire.

We went climbing toward the snow peaks, toward the  
limits, toward the light beyond the snow;

Beacons quenched and ruined watch towers labored past.  
At last we turned to watch the world below

Where a cross stood sagging, slanting, slowly sinking by  
a bare deserted shrine,  
Close beside the open adit, like a hungry mouth of nothing  
of an old abandoned mine.

We went climbing past the past that time has gutted,  
ending empty works and hollow creeds.

We went climbing towards tomorrow, towards the truth  
that out of sorrow shapes our human, our immortal  
needs.

One by one my brothers staggered, fell and lay; and  
dying drove us on before.

Last my love and I alone were left till day grew grey, and  
tricked and tripped us more and more;

Marred her face, her brave eyes hid. At last I lost her  
where a swirl of mist

Mocked my eyes, my cries. But something pulsed within  
me, crept behind me, forced and flogged me to  
persist.

Something cried "She may be strong and true, and  
stronger, truer too than you,

You may meet her at the summit when the sunlight lights  
the falling fires of life that flame anew."

We went climbing through the blackness until memory  
merged in pain that senseless struggle flayed away.

Climbing, clutching, creeping, kneeling; fainting, falling,  
rising, reeling; with the weight of night I wrestled.  
Suddenly I won today.

So despair I passed at last. Alone I scaled the summit:  
saw the dawn;  
Higher snow peaks, wider ranges, like the lines of God's  
gray gospel, like His secret thoughts withdrawn;  
Wrote my word in straggling letters; piled my cairn with  
fingers numb;  
Watched the myriad marching banners of the sunrise up-  
ward come;  
Gathered breath and tightened belt, and turned towards  
endless stairs of stone,  
Flaming up to Life's last summit, where the souls that live  
to struggle, where the strong in desolation, trace  
slow trails of truth alone.

*New York, 1-6-13*



## OLYMPIADE

WE who are sons of the North, of the hills, of the  
woods, of the sea,  
Sons of the men that our earth has sent forth, its makers  
and masters to be;  
This is our song, and the stress of our brain, the beat of  
our heart and the tread of our feet;  
That is wrought into triumph through toil and through  
pain, and the will that is steel when the mighty  
shall meet.

Now the runners are poised. They are tense on their  
mark, like an orchestra tuning its strings;  
Till a pistol's report, like a spark in the dark, has spurred  
them and shod them with wings.  
And each movement is music, each stride is a rhyme and  
a rhythm. And the beat and the scrape  
Of the feet on the track are like currents that chafe  
round the bends in their banks. Like a cape  
That is girdled by surf, the last corner is turned. Like  
the race and the rush of the tides  
They break down the home stretch. The runner is breast-  
ing the tape. And his soul in his strides  
Sings the song of the blood, of the breath, of the brain,  
of the bones and the sinews and thews;  
The song of the strong, of the fullness of life that its  
forces must master and use;

The song of the strength and the sleight of the hand, and  
the muscles like fighting men trained,  
That advance and retreat as the will gives the word, till  
the battle is drawn or is gained.

And the strong men advance to their trial. They are  
shrewd with their grapples and weights.  
And the wrestlers lie locked. They draw breath for  
a while. And the primitive terrors and hates  
Of the cave man who first cast a stone at despair, are  
this shot putter's sudden reserves.  
Like the head of a lance, like the fang of a snake, as he  
summons his sinews and nerves  
For one moment, one task, he is man; he is more; he is  
all that creation has won  
Out of the chaos and night; one more lunge to the light;  
one more stride toward the stars and the sun.

This is the song of the blood, of the sire, of the son, of  
the sister, the mother, the wife;  
All that flow by our sides like a river in flood, through  
the veins of a race that life strains out of strife.  
This is the song of the breed, of the lean Viking sea  
wolves by land and by sea,  
That ran round the world till they trained to succeed;  
that can master tomorrow and all that shall be.

And their footfalls are singing, their runnings are runes.

And they run as the waves and the rivers must  
run;

Like the wind and the rain and the throbbing of pain,  
like the winging of birds, like the light of the sun.

And like rest after struggle, like sleep in the night; in  
the lull of the shouting, the pause of the song,  
Comes a moment immortal of love and delight in the  
souls of the thousands that echo the strong.

Though the breath of the runner may falter and fail to-  
morrow, he lives to his limit today;

One note, and one word, and one stride on the trail of  
the race that must run till the stars shall decay.

*Stockholm, 7-19-12*

## REVENANTS

THERE is a day of all the saints, and then  
A day of all the souls of God on earth,  
All the faint forms wherein He found himself  
Fulfilled; or failed. The last warm wistful days,  
Drifting with haze and haloed with faint sunlight  
Summon them back to warm themselves and live.

The year's last harvest has been set aside.  
Men gather its last gleamings. So they come  
To gleam behind us saving shreds of pity,  
And golden seeds of sorrows still unsuffered.

We may remember them when autumn drives  
The leaves before him. They are frailer still,  
More than the leaves, innumerable, wan,  
Faint as the smoke of autumn fires that mounts  
To meet the haze, and dies before the daylight.

These are the golden days of memory,  
The whole world makes its own before it buries  
The dying year in winter's drifted marble;  
Days when they most have power to live in us.

Endless processions passing from the past,  
Souls of strong sins and stronger loves and sorrows,  
Men whose hands made us; mothers of our mothers,  
Seen in our children's lips and eyes one second.

This is their season, they who in our blood  
Clamor each hour; who knock at dead of night  
At our hard hearts; whose dead hands slay or save  
When we remember most, and most we need them.

Then the warm world for winter's storms prepares;  
Till, like the drifting leaves, at last they vanish.

*Peconic, 6-1-14*

## ADVENTURERS

ONCE we walked the windlass round, stamping to  
the chanter's sound; sang to start her.  
Once we threw our dice with death; shifting ballast,  
trembling breath, strove to barter.

Burning mountains, islands far, where the trade wind's  
courses are, then we sighted:  
Cities sacked and set afire. Lives we lost for love or  
hire. We have lighted  
Beacons bright in boyhood's eyes. Treasons shrewd with  
shrewder lies we requited.

Continents whose nerves were night, trail by trail we  
dragged to light. All we charted,  
Till today from pole to pole we have run and grasped  
our goal, restless hearted.

What tomorrow shall we do, what assail and what pursue,  
where adventure?  
All your life's a ledger page. And your earth is gray with  
age. Law's indenture  
Makes your days the days of slaves. And your fathers  
from their graves their sons censure.

When we force your last frontier, when our hearts for-  
getting fear, tame and cruel

Grow as your sick souls have grown: how shall life win  
back its own, find new fuel?

To the jungle said the farm, "When your power to spoil  
and harm, all is ended;  
How shall I my limits know, where begin and cease to  
grow." Time defended  
Silently the jungle smiled, like a savage or a child, wild  
and splendid.

This was so ere Rome was old. Before Babylon grew  
cold, men were asking  
"Must we pay this price of peace? Shall, untried, our  
valor cease, legion-tasking?"

Your barbarians begin, hordes without you and within,  
to beleaguer  
Every city you have built out of greed and blood and  
guilt. Bodies meager,  
Spirits weak as women fail. Life is tireless. Life is  
male. Life is eager.

Clouds of gnats and airships soar, dive to death: but more  
and more life arises.  
Through the ether science-mined, lens and rays new  
marvels find, new surmises.

Life lines up your last reserves. Where the jungle in  
your nerves life is wasting.

Where your sons degenerate clots of greed disintegrate,  
death foretasting;

Every savage in the slum is a pledge of life to come,  
full, unhasting.

War its thunder nearer rolls, soon to search and sift  
your souls. You who tame her

Starve and make of peace a whore, where your millions  
men adore, stain and shame her.

War is worship for the free. Since man first began to  
be, our endeavor,

Legionaries, errant knights, pioneers, life's acolytes: rest-  
ing never,

Seeking out its God unknown, till the last man dies alone;  
lives forever.

*Los Angeles, 10-20-13*



## *SAILORS*

**O**UT of the deep the waves rise up to praise Thee.  
Day after day the tides in high procession  
Singing their songs of praise, make earth an altar  
Under Thy boundless temple dome of sky.  
Year after year their multitudes adored Thee,  
Millions of lives obscured that lived to die.

Nations of men innumerable served Thee;  
Out of their weakness wrought Thy ships and sailors;  
Out of their blindness found Thy farthest islands;  
Charted Thy coasts and foundered in Thy storms.  
Millions of ships they wrecked in mist and midnight.  
Out of Thy fogs a planet's vision forms.

Now we have seen Thy breakers by Thy searchlights;  
Pricked on Thy maps Thy poles in due position;  
Now we precisely make our weekly landfalls.  
Along Thy sea lanes steadily there go  
Thousands of ships in endless, swift procession;  
Bearing Thy burdens, Master, to and fro.

We are Thy priests, O Lord. The rest forgetful  
Doze on Thy decks, and count their gains and losses.  
We are Thy priests. Thy spirit shares our watches  
Where in the fog Thy bergs are loosed to slay:  
Where in the night Thy rocks reach up to rend us.  
We are Thy priests O Lord, by night and day.

We are Thy priests. We lead Thy people onward.  
Pluck them from listless cares to watch Thy wonders,  
Teach them to hear Thy voice in calms and thunders.  
Wave after wave we lift Thy host on high.  
We are Thy celebrants of stars and whirlwinds,  
Turned to Thy altar lights to see Thy sky.

*Peconic, 6-3-14*

## *SOLDIERS*

ONCE we fought on with fear and night with broken  
flints and boughs of trees.

We forged us blades and shafts of light. With fire we  
slew our enemies.

We led ten thousand men to fight where once we marched  
by twos and threes.

Chieftains and kings we swept away. We brought our  
bleeding captives home,

And gold and women. Yesterday our triumphs crowned  
the hills of Rome.

Altars and arch in ruins lay, and time defiled each temple  
dome.

Still we went marching on. We stood the sentinels of  
progress there

On Nubian sands, in Dacian wood. When Rome brought  
home her last despair

To meet the Hun's red brotherhood, we made our end  
an iron prayer.

We made our discipline a law for later legions, pioneered  
New empires that the Spaniards saw, guarded his gods.

Westward we steered,

Felt English canvas slat and draw, till time's new world  
to truth appeared.

We made New England. Born to be her Pilgrim spirits,  
ironsides

Stern as her winters and her sea, we wrestled with her  
storms and tides.

We took her forest, tree by tree, from death that in the  
darkness hides.

We slew her savages. We went across the mountains  
and the plains,

Marched on and made a continent for all the world: from  
our red veins

Baptized your states. Our strength we spent to found  
this nation that remains.

We freed the slave. Of death we made a sacrament, a  
brotherhood.

Into his incense black and frayed the battle flags reeled  
on and stood;

Till our last dead to rest were laid before his altar. Hill  
and wood

Still trenched and scarred, where spring is green, bear  
witness to our iron rites.

We raised a temple vast, unseen. And there our brothers  
walk at night,

And see the shames that crawl between their monuments.  
From starry heights

They wait to watch their nation wake when God's red  
Sabbath comes again,  
When one by one His soldiers take His altar steps through  
iron rain;  
When women's hearts their martyrs make of freemen  
fallen not in vain.

Your editors, with liar's souls blaspheme our service.  
Blind and slow  
Your Congress thins our muster rolls. Your aliens snarl.  
By this we know  
That Death shall take his double tolls when forth to God  
our banners go.

*Peconic, 6-4-14*

## *PRIESTS*

**W**E waved torches in the night, we dealt in spells.  
We traded fear.

We raised ghosts. We wrought with wizards, making  
portents black appear.

We made lies and murder serve us, stealing power from  
far and near.

Others bowed to Bacchus blindly. We their drunken  
madness led.

Others gave their babes to Moloch; for our good they  
burned and bled.

Others virgins to Astarte brought, to us, who never wed.

We grew great by hoarding secrets, shared by us of earth  
and skies,

Secrets of the hoards of others, secrets wrung from rest-  
less eyes,

Secret shames, sick fears of mothers. In all wickedness  
made wise

We grew rich; but man grew strong. The wide black  
spider web of night

Strand by strand in silence burning; fire by fire, he fought  
to light.

So we made us gods that left him damned forever in  
God's sight.

He grew greater. He grew tender, till a mother and a  
child  
Born to bless, he dreamed. And we betrayed his hopes,  
and love that smiled,  
Fearing hell that flamed forever; failed and died by us  
defiled.

We set shackles on men's spirits. We weighed down their  
hearts with dread,  
Burned stray bodies at the stake, set thumb screws round  
man's fingers red.  
And with crippled fingers groping, man went marching on  
ahead.

We forbade his mind to mount where we had taught his  
soul to crawl.  
Man that breaks his idols slowly, past each crumbling  
temple wall  
Looked beyond us to the stars, and found in slime new  
life for all.

Whether Christ is better shrined in Rome or Moscow,  
now no more  
Rends men's lives. And men today a God of larger life  
adore.  
Life that batters down its idols, they must build and  
battle for.

We are failing, we are falling, we that preach a god of  
lies,  
To the women, to the children, to the blind. In darkness  
dies  
Our dominion of the shadows, every shame that light  
denies.

Now the world outgrowing fear no more can worship  
yesterday.  
Now it needs no more our creeds, nor prays as children  
blindly pray.  
Like all life extinct Thy martyrs are. Lord, we shall  
be as they.

*Peconic, 8-21-13*



*MODERNS*



## A PORTRAIT

DR. ALEXIS CARREL

THE eyes behind the glasses look at you,  
They probe your flesh. They pierce your spirit  
through.

You stand before a Jesuit in white,  
A new high priest of life's last order — Light.

Since out of darkness came the will to be,  
The soul to suffer and the mind to see;  
Since life's long ladder leads us to today;  
Since ages lapse and nations pass away;  
Since from its ashes life renews its flame;  
Out of an ape's misshapen brain he came.

He comes today to make the crooked straight,  
Out of a wilderness of lust and hate.  
He comes to heal the halt. The dumb shall speak.  
The blind shall see what still they dumbly seek.

*Man has all power.* He holds the beating heart  
Torn from the breast. He takes the flesh apart  
To save the soul that tortured still survives.  
He works his miracles on modern lives.  
And out of pain, disease, despair, decay;  
He raises life and levers death away.

His scapels harrow highways hard of One  
Who waits till his forerunner's task is done.  
His brain records, his lenses life dissect,  
Till men a stronger Saviour still expect.

For not to end in darkness evermore,  
Men rise from night and dreams of light adore.  
Today our surgeons triumph over pain.  
We shall see stronger surgeons of the brain,  
Surgeons of doubt, defeat; at last a Goal  
Won from this wilderness that wastes the soul.

*New York, 1-1-13*

## *THE TEST TUBE*

**H**ERE is chaos swiftly whirling where a Bunsen  
burner's flame  
Sets a million atoms swirling, atoms that from ether came;  
Flame from sunlight man-sublimed that I might give  
my germ a name.

Here my culture lives and spreads, and growing faster  
day by day,  
Drives one dread of all man's dreads of death and night  
and cold away,  
Till an antitoxin new once more rekindles mortal clay.

Here creation in this glass the æons and the centuries  
In due season bring to pass perfectly. And such as these  
Fumes that swirl around each planet newly born, the  
Master sees.

Once we fought with shapes of fear and life was frozen  
in the night,  
Till an ape that seared his hand, clutched a brand and  
clung to light.  
Once we dreamed that love alone, evil's essence could set  
right.

Good and evil, twin, entwined, in this glass our lenses  
show ;

Seeds of death by man refined to cure, not kill, at last  
we know.

All processions of atoms through the ages come and  
go:

Through the ether, through the midnight, through the  
earth, through children pale,

Warped and wasted in our slums till all creation seems to  
fail:

Till their prayers, their sighs unheard, avail to make this  
glass a grail.

*Denver, 10-13-13*

## *THE NEW STAR*

**W**E hold the upper places fast. On many a mountain  
height  
Our watch towers stand. We map the stars, we chart  
the curves of light  
Like men who saw o'er Bethlehem a new star in the  
night.

We wander through the infinite, the wilderness of space,  
To worship Truth revealed to man, a spectrum new to  
trace,  
To find some planet fresh prepared to be Love's dwelling  
place.

This world is old and full of sin and sickness, sure to  
die.  
It serves its purpose and it ends, the same as you and  
I,  
We are your Prophets who translate the gospel of the  
sky.

Here on our conning tower of time, our turret of today,  
Searchlight and gun, artillery of truth, we serve and  
sway,  
We shell the midnight with men's minds till legions black  
give way.

For men of old steered by the stars o'er land and shore-  
less sea,  
And coast by coast their earth explored. And so today  
do we,  
Who sound the eddies of the skies till flesh and soul sail  
free.

When coracles to galleys grew by Sidon and by Tyre;  
Our fathers pricked their parchment charts, they nursed  
a smothered fire,  
They lit their spirits at the stars, to struggle, starve,  
aspire.

And not aloof and lone we are, nor far divorced as they  
From all that live upon the land, that walk the human  
way,  
Who struggle, strive and stumble on, who all one law  
obey.

We are your eyes but we have ears for human joy and  
pain.

When surgeons like creators carve from chaos life again,  
When some new poet like a star appears, we too attain.

We watch the faces of our wives new lit while we dissect  
Both light and night, the very void, and life's last nerve  
detect.



And while our children smile we probe the love of God's  
elect.

We measure life, but more we live, we feel the rising  
tide,

The Brute that out of blackness born, that scarred and  
crucified,

Sees star by star the Grail supreme that death shall fail  
to hide.

*New York, 12-24-12*

## SCIENCE AND THE EDITOR

**M**EN should envy me you say for all I know and try  
to do:

Test tubes, cultures, truth dissected. Well I wish that I  
were you

With your fountain pen that probes, your hyperdermics,  
truth and lies;

Subtle drugs that cure or kill the will, the mind, that you  
devise

In this cosmic laboratory of the city that you daily rush  
and crush and stumble through.

So you've heard this mongrel yelping. He was happy for  
a day.

First we fed his puppy's paunch. Then Otto taught him  
how to play.

Vivisected, racked to marrow, matter red disintegrates.

But his heart inside a jar beats, and time's tenth hour  
awaits

Ticking off the vital seconds until fools forget their folly,  
glimpse our goal that's stars away.

Better dogs like life itself run like brooks, like sunbeams  
breed.

Here this heart upon the shelf helps all manhood to suc-  
ceed.

Anti-vivisection slush still you publish when it pays.

Fools will gush and weakness whimpers. Half your tribe  
the truth dismays.

Human mongrels in perdition, souls by Wall Street vivi-  
sected, out of blindness man must lead.

Redlight hearts in dingy jars, fingers grafted from a child  
To the race that clutches stars, by your cotton mills de-  
filed;

All the raw tormented truth that you trade in; spirits  
bowed;

All the dreams profaned of youth your six inch headlines  
shriek aloud;

Fumes of heaven and hell together are in time's long  
laboratory, sublimated, reconciled.

Test tubes, cultures, here are clean, deadly microbes though  
we brew,

Yours are clouded and obscene. Antiseptics science knew  
Only yesterday, remember. Vice you've yet to segregate.  
Yes, and Greed: but little children from the tenements of  
hate,

Can't we take from Satan's test tubes, rear in cultures  
clear as crystal, somehow, sometime, I and you?

Here's the section of an eye, the rest I grafted — cataract  
Cured completely. Millions die to leave one tiny lens in-  
tact.

Graft the truth, man, fix and free it, clean and clear for  
minds that blink,

Though you die the race shall see it, see with thoughts  
you dared to think.

Maybe in his endless purpose, God shall save you from  
extinction, graft the slice of soul you lacked.

*New York, 12-12-12*

## BURNT SACRIFICE

GOD poured a beaker of His wrath today  
Into this casting pit, on human clay  
Lost in the flood of molten steel that leapt  
Out of the crucible. Two women wept,  
Their children wailed. And still these iron pulses beat  
Where hell's blast furnaces a nation's life blood heat.

Two men were blotted out. Their funeral  
No mourners throng. No mother may recall  
How her son lay in death and smiled at her,  
Or tend his grave. Yet were they happier  
Than millions crushed to slime by man's obscene machine,  
Their lives were gray with grime. The death they died  
was clean.

For these lost soldiers on life's firing line  
We have no tears; a cautery divine  
Seared them away to cleanse our discontent.  
Some mighty bridge may be their monument.  
In death they live. But we, slavish and tyrannous,  
How shall our souls go free? How shall it profit us?

*New York, 10-14-12*

## THE BRIDGE BUILDER

ONCE the powers that planned the oceans left an  
island near the shore  
In the angle vast, reëntrant, reaching down from Labra-  
dor,  
At the West's great watergate. And there Manhattan  
came to be,  
In the purpose plotting surely life for all on land and sea.

Life was shipped from overseas, and there remained. Two  
cities there  
Reaching out struck hands together, held them clasped.  
They sent me where  
I went sinking caissons slowly, eighty feet below the day,  
Through the quicksand driving wedges, till my towers  
were under way.

Once they built a tower at Babel. Babels twain I rose  
between,  
Tuned my cables, tightened trusses, till my symphony was  
seen,  
Strong, enduring, flawless, finished. Where the cities'  
noise grows still  
In midstream, midair, I made it, all its soul of steel athrill.

Till the storms came up to shake it. Firm it stood. Each  
girder twanged

In the wind's wild orchestration. Where my hammers  
beat and clanged  
Every rivet held. And I and all my iron fighting men  
Knew that mind could bind the sky, knew that man was  
master then.

Flawless where it stood I left it. Finished? No. The  
stage was there.  
Then began a greater building of that drama in the air,  
Millions stage each night and morning, when the wheels  
began to roll.  
In tomorrow's vast cathedral, just one pathway of the  
soul;

Just one aisle, I left to others. Men shall mount when I  
am dead.  
Life's procession past my piers shall march, and higher  
overhead  
See the towers of mightier builders. Yet this thing I left  
to be  
Strong, essential, fit for service as the mountains and the  
sea.

Far, far inland my approaches slowly rise as millions rise.  
Up from bed rock, climbing slowly, come our towers to  
scale the skies.

Like two shackled seraphs standing wing to wing they  
struggle still,  
Bridging man's last baffled ages, till tomorrow shall work  
our will.

*New York, 6-9-14*



## CONGRESS CONVENES

**T**WO clock hands meet. A chaplain blind invokes  
A god unknown men worship here with lies.  
The business of the session has begun.  
A man from Massachusetts has the floor:  
From Massachusetts: — once she stood for freedom.

Her manufacturers and union leaders  
Deal with Rhode Island. Kansas intervenes,  
Insurgent, shrewd. Here farm must fight with mill,  
Mine with plantation, poverty with riches,  
Millions with human hearts and hopes that perish.

Here is no senate stately, of free states.  
We have made here a clearing house of hatreds,  
Mean jealousies and petty greeds and fears,  
Of special interests, monstrous and minute,  
As these hard human lips and eyes of liars.

These are our masks, our clowns, our Punchinellos:  
Puppets we play with blindly; and the gods  
Look down and laugh at us who lavish here  
Our souls on shams. For underneath it all  
We live and love and see the stars at night.

Even these husks contain the hearts of heroes.  
These monstrous paunches human entrails hide;  
Something that sleeps and may be waked. And walking

Like men asleep they offer gifts to Him  
Who out of endless patience shapes His planets.

For slowly out of gluttony and lust,  
Blindness and greed, the sentient soul of man  
Wakens to wrongs and wider brotherhood,  
As the first cave man found a world outside  
His stagnant cave; and starward strode forever.

*Peconic, 5-29-14*

## COMMENCEMENT

THEY are coming from the chapel under trees where  
Lowell walked:  
Gownsmen all in slow procession. Here where Wendell  
Phillips talked,  
Winthrop, Adams, Hancock, Standish, Sumner, Evarts  
live again  
In the names and in the faces of these boys we turn to  
men.

Alma Mater, first and oldest, in a world no longer new,  
Sternest in thy creed and coldest, striving, grasping, false  
and true:  
All the world demands an answer, law; a gospel here to-  
day:  
In thy eyes would see salvation. But thy gaze is turned  
away.

All the world is working, striving. Suffering its children  
cry.  
Thou must search thy heart, assure us, lest the soul in us  
should die.  
All these faces, firm and wistful, feet that fall in cadenced  
beat,  
Bring thee nearer to thy moment of new triumph or de-  
feat.

At thy word our sires for freedom falling, fifty years ago,  
Drifting in the wind of battle, where men's lives were lost  
like snow,

Died. Today our war is greater; ghastlier loss its lords  
devise.

Harder things than lead and steel we feel who reel and  
how to lies.

Hate and horror long besiege us. Doubt and error crept  
within,

Spied within these halls where traitors hide; the restless  
hosts of sin

Sap our walls. Aloof no longer we may bide. Our  
citadel

Only can be won by soldiers, rallying where heaven and  
hell

Wrestle through the world. We send them, these, our  
boys, our last, our best;

Young, unfitted, blind, aspiring, fearless, to a nation's test.

War is wreckage, rout and ruin. Drifting shreds of souls  
that fall

Stumbling forth from shame to triumph, rallying shall hear  
thee call.

Truth is militant and mighty. We her last reserves shall  
rise.

Truth is fearless. We shall find her in these clear, unconquered eyes.

Truth is ours who free our spirits though our flesh in weakness dies.

We shall march behind their shoulders, seeing in their eyes that see

After struggle greater struggle, new Americas to be,  
Maimed and bleeding: till thy word is heard forever clear  
and free.

*New York, 6-8-14*

## THE POLICE MAGISTRATE

THOU who the hearts of men dost weigh, the surgeon  
of our souls today,  
Whose headlines probe our rottenness: Thou that has set  
me here on high  
To scan the symptoms of our sins, to diagnose each choking  
cry  
Of truth and terror, horror, shame, and sin that lives alone  
to die;  
Making thy law a medicine for spirits sick, too tired to  
play;

Thou that dost make the mighty small, infected by the city's  
sins;  
Making thy minor souls the same, the slaves of fear, and  
greed and lust;  
Making red murders merciful, that flowers might blossom  
from the dust;  
Making thy hero's hearts from hell, that men that die  
might learn to trust  
This people's tortured soul that still from wickedness to  
worship wins.

Draw near to us and bear with us, in this, thy nation's  
hour of trial;  
For Justice is made merchandise, and judges bought and  
sold like whores.

They walk the streets with restless eyes. They enter in  
by secret doors.

They live by power that trades in lies, and light and liberty  
deplores,

And all the lovely things of life that in the shadows strive  
to smile.

Their rottenness has left me here in thy law's ante-room;  
not there

Where in thy high courts, eyes benign and base, thine equal  
justice wrest.

Lord, I was jealous for Thy truth. I dreamed that I  
might serve Thee best

In dignity, and power and ease, where slowly men Thy  
pleadings test;

Where all Thy last appeals are heard in larger light and  
ampler air.

There in thy law's last balance room at Washington, the  
scales are set

To weigh each thousandth part of truth; and there nine  
men whose souls are thine,

Make laboratory tests of law, assay success and power  
malign;

Hand thy decisions down to earth. No longer, Lord,  
that goal is mine.

Here in Thy clinic drear, of crime, I learn to labor and  
forget.

Here at first hand I deal with life. This power they  
missed I wield alone.

Here by the altar of Thy law, old sins, old shames, old  
treasons stand:

Mute supplicants, dumb hopes, sad eyes that see new  
light, a nobler land.

For men still make tomorrow here. I hold its substance  
in my hand

Until at last they cast me out, old age or evil, both Thine  
own.

*Peconic, 6-2-14*



## THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

THIS is our bank of learning modern and marble  
floored.

And here I stand like a teller, and gods men once adored,  
Old rituals of idols, go blindly through my hands  
To a world that faith forgetting, today misunderstands,  
And fails to find in its making a larger law's commands.

Here we have twenty talents stored and a thousand score.  
And to him that hath shall be given. We lend him more  
and more.

And from him that lacks shall be taken. And the years  
shall strip away

From the cheap and the tawdry faces the youth of yesterday,

Readers of tales as vital as a child tells in his play.

And the cheap and the childish credos, the old ancestral  
lies,

We slowly learn to sublimate. And error's dark disguise,

And the rotting husks and wrappings of truth that the  
simple see,

We strip from her fair white body. We toil to set her  
free.

For men made of truth a mummy once and cheated you  
and me.

This is our city's clinic for its deaf and dumb and blind.  
This is our laboratory where new germs of thought we  
find.

And one man's mind is a microscope. One strong soul  
soars afar,

And hales us healing sure and hope, from the orbit of a  
star,

One larger letter of the law, whose servants all we are.

We all are the law's small servants; atoms of life today,  
Like the flowers that fade upon my desk, and that child  
that turns away

Stunted, pale, consumptive, with her heaven in her eye,  
Hugging her book of fairy tales. And she loves each  
golden lie.

But the world outgrows its fairy tales. And the child  
must grow or die.

Day after day they come and go, the crude, the cheap, the  
young,

With their little pitiful poets, and their songs long since  
outsung.

And the God of all light and glory, who caused His stars  
to be,

Does He read each childish story that they write for you  
and me?

This is His laboratory, where He toils to set men free.

*Peconic, 6-22-14*

## *WOMEN*



## HELEN

FLOWERS — I cannot bear them for they fade.  
Their fragrance is of death — their fading petals  
Are clods of earth time flings on beauty's coffin.  
For in the full unfolding of the rose,  
There comes a time when the least breath of air,  
The echo of a word, may be her end  
And I am near it. All I have today  
Tomorrow is the wind's,— Be merciful.

I have been beautiful and known no mercy.  
I have been happy, if this happiness  
Be blooming in the sunlight like a rose,  
Sufficient in itself. But he who gave  
Dew to His roses, gave to souls like mine  
A martyrdom of mirrors, and of tears.

Here where I watched my woman's blossoming,  
Here where I planned my triumphs and fulfilled them,  
Time turns his first least thread of that torment. I  
Am made my own soul's executioner.

My mirror is my rack — and I shall see  
When the scars show, the springtime and the dawn;  
And how I wasted them. And I shall call  
Out of my agony, to lovers dead —  
And to the living this one word. "Remember"!

And some of them shall hear me. Some of them  
Shall see me in their dreams, and make of me  
An image and a song of suffering,  
Their agony and mine, too true to die;  
Poignant and timeless as the spring herself; —  
Where men shall see me walking and shall worship  
What I once was in other eyes — forever.

*Seattle, 12-5-13*

## MANNEQUINS

**P**ALE slaves that swell the triumph of your Pagan  
emperor Poiret,  
Weak captives of your caliph, Worth, around your Roman  
ring we go.  
When Satan's big department store has staged its harness  
women's show.  
When Easter brings its blossoms forth. Outside the  
world is making May,  
And bending to the baby buds, pale sunbeams and frail  
breezes play.

God gave me brains to see myself as others see.  
He gave me curves that catch the eye, a face that lures  
and hair that flames,  
A heart that trembles through the streets, that shivers at  
their sudden shames.  
He made twenty and unloved, in Satan's dress parade to  
be  
Forever hungry and alone. What hope on earth is there  
for me?

For prostitutes are on their own. But we who walk your  
tread mill here  
Are made your slaves at second hand, the sport of every  
eye that rolls,  
Sleek odalisques of lust that calls to stronger lust to take  
his tolls:

Smeared mirrors of your evil souls that come and stare  
and disappear:

Until the best of us becomes a creeping pest of greed and  
fear.

Here in our last sad circle of your new inferno, Dante's  
brain,

That wrote in gall and venom, failed to guess our griev-  
ance and despair:

These robes of princess-prostitutes, that painted flesh is  
proud to wear,

That Paris and its panders sell. You whisper, smile and  
sneer. Again

You go your way, the weight you swell of all life's pov-  
erty and pain.

You leave us for your meaner ends, who wear our livery  
of shame

Around your Roman ring outside, where you are slaves no  
less than we.

To us through sunless windows floats one breath of April  
and the sea,

Of woods where pine trees fringe the sky. You make life  
cruel, vile and tame.

Till God and man and devil die; where woman most must  
bear the blame.

*Hong-kong, 1-21-14*



## THE HANDMAID

I TRY to say as Mary said,  
“ Behold the handmaid of the Lord,”  
A smile upon her lips, and dread  
Within her heart,— a sword.

Today he walked, he came to me,  
Up to life's altar bore his heart.  
I caught him up — too close to see,  
Yet seemed to stand apart.

Tonight he waked, I held him tight,  
And watched as I went to and fro  
The long processions, through the night,  
Of mothers come and go.

Up to life's altar and away,  
Each bore her gift, and hushed his cries  
With tired Te Deums. So today  
God hears our lullabies.

*Peconic, 9-30-13*

## LA GITANA

NONE of the girls of Ronda have feet as fine as mine,  
That glimmer and glance through the whirl of the dance  
as fireflies blaze and shine,  
Seen in some shadowy rambla outside a gay café.  
None of the girls in Ronda can dance down death, my way.

Carmen and fat Conchita can sell themselves for shoes,  
Black as their souls with the heels of red, such as the  
Cubans use.  
They can sell themselves for their stockings, their spider  
webs of silk,  
And their feet like their brows are brazen, but mine are  
white as milk.

For mine was a Northern mother my gipsy father found  
In a brothel in Biscaya. And love in drink he drowned.  
So I grew up in the gutter, slinking and wild to be  
Alone, alive, in the open, sunlit, and flushed and free,  
Naked in running rivers. So I must dance today  
Where the eyes of the men are upon my face and flesh  
like beasts of prey.

And the tongues of the tawdry women they tear my life  
apart

And they smear my name with their women's shame as  
their teeth would tear my heart,

As they'd rip the flesh away from my face and the bodice  
from my breasts.

And the wave of life is around me. I am lifted on its  
crests.

I am lifted high on its surges; and the light it lends my  
eyes

Is the strength of noon and sunrise and the splendor of  
the skies.

I am caged in their snarling city, but between its shadowy  
bars

I see the loom of tomorrow and the altar lights of stars.  
Savage, violent, virgin; like a trainer in their cage,

They snarl at my looks like lashes, these women marred  
with age,

These men that my mind has mastered; and I rule their  
restless lives

With my feet that flicker through shadows like the bicker-  
ing light of knives.

I dance and they bow before me. Barefoot I turn, I  
tread

On the throbbing hearts of the living and the ashes of  
the dead.

I dance till I stop, where he stands apart; till I hold his  
love and hate:

Master and man and the bravest heart, sultan and slave  
and mate.

*Paris, 5-16-13*

## ANNUNCIATION

**A**CROSS the air shaft is a window high.  
Across the sill the shadows slowly creep.  
Lilting a little childish lullaby,  
A little maiden lulls a doll to sleep.

A little childish form that comes and goes,  
That bends above its baby, nurses there  
The warmth of life that opens wide the rose,  
That wraps its buds against the April air.

Behind her walk dead women wondering  
At the pure rapture in the childish eyes,  
As bright and glad as the first sight of spring,  
The first blue rift in winter's leaden skies.

Madonnas, saints and sinners, beggars, queens;  
All the pale past, by pain and passion torn;  
Lean close, as closer to her child she leans,  
Bearing within her heart her babe unborn.

*S.S. Awa Maru, 12-18-13*

## *A WOMAN*

**W**HY she married him I don't know. How she sticks  
to him I can't tell.

Second by second and inch by inch she goes on lifting  
him out of hell.

Smiles when you see her. Her lips grow tense like a  
tired runner that true to form

Moves without haste through the swirls of dust that  
follow the feet of the first of the storm.

Once she was prettier than the rose. Just so simple and  
soft and sweet:

Laughed like a brook that sings in the spring. Now she  
has toiled past her first defeat.

Time has taken and hardened her heart to the heart of  
a woman that dares, that bears,

All things still for the love she lost. Now she has done  
with old visions and prayers.

Time has trained her to live and to last, making her  
patient and sure and still,

Thoroughbred, lean and fine: each line is a line of strength.  
She is all one will

Waking and working and holding fast his life, that shivers  
and shrinks and falls,

Blundering blindly from door to door in the city's maze  
with its millions of walls.

Now she nods where she wasted words as he wastes his  
silver and drains away  
His soul's solution in glasses tall, where he clings to  
each clink. Now day by day  
Her first caresses she wastes no more on the child of her  
fears where she dreads to see  
What in his father she worshipped once, and she never  
looks backward or listens to me.

Resolute, silent, day after day she lifts him up as he sags  
and shrinks.  
Fighting for breath she goes winning her way. Now no  
longer of shame she thinks,  
Now no more of pleasure or pain, than girlish ribbons and  
dresses outgrown.  
She is a woman, one heart and brain that God first gave  
us to mother its own.

Dick isn't vicious or wicked or wild; simply weak and  
worthless as waste,  
For wiping life's engines. He keeps her clean and keen  
and shining in breathless haste:  
Just her big baby to wash and to kiss when his face and his  
hands are smeared with the street.  
God Almighty has made her for this, while her heart  
which is His to the limit shall beat.

She was my dream. She has grown beyond dreams and  
Dick, and herself, and me,  
She wouldn't drop if they lifted the load. Couldn't be  
wasted. People see  
Day after day in her lips and her eyes one of life's leaders  
and conquerors.  
Something that toils through tides and skies to carry life  
on to tomorrow is hers.

*New York, 6-23-14*



## BEDTIME

HE was not willing quite to go,  
And yet he came and clung to me.  
His drowsy eyes could barely see:  
Up the long stairs he stumbled so.

And there our pilgrimage we made,  
And climbing high to heaven, once more  
I watched his wistful lips adore  
The God that makes the stars afraid.

I stood beside him and I sang  
As the young planets, choiring, when  
They first conceived the souls of men,  
Through all the aisles of heaven rang.

He heard me. In his sleep he smiled:  
And a new moonbeam in the night  
Crept from the clouds, a prayer in white;  
Kissed as I kissed, my little child.

*Portland, Oregon, 12-3-13.*

## *THE OLD MOTHER*

**F**ROM my body, heart and brain  
He was born to give me pain.  
In his making I was made,  
In his sins my soul is weighed.

I lost sleep that he might sleep,  
Dared not weep lest he should weep.  
Long I watched him through the night.  
One small will I called to light:

All a lifetime fighting in  
One small baby's fevered skin.  
Death I wrestled with and threw:  
Watched him wake. So dear he grew.

He has work to justify  
Now, and one as near as I;  
Work too easy, wife too slight:  
Once more watching all the night,

I grow slowly sure and wise.  
So he missed his father's eyes.  
Still his father's spirit lives  
Somewhere in him. Life forgives,

All when he comes back to me  
Tired and sad and glad to be

Just a little child once more,  
Near me on the nursery floor.

Then my hand upon his brow  
Holds his heart. And I know now  
How to suffer for his sake  
Till his soul in strength shall wake.

*Peconic, 8-9-14*

## HER BIRTHDAY

**E**IGHTEEN already? Still it seems  
This world of wickedness is good.  
Still she sees sunrise in her dreams;  
The mysteries of maidenhood  
Lie like light shadows on her brow;  
Her lips are like red rosebuds now.

Soon they shall open like her heart.  
I watch her, wistful, wondering.  
When time's last petals fall apart  
Shall she still singing smile at spring?  
She smiles at me; and shall we fear  
September, dear, when spring is here?

Her eyes have looked on lovely things  
So long, their light is loveliness.  
Her thoughts are white; their tender wings  
Like flitting butterflies caress  
All souls that seared by sin and pain  
Still on the side of light remain.

Her voice is beauty, born to be  
The music clear of love that thrills  
Through her young pulses. So is she  
Sister of streams and stars and hills.  
She is one word that God has made  
To meet tomorrow unafraid.

While the warm fragrance of her soul  
Blends with the air I breathe, I know  
She is one part of one great whole,  
That sends her sisters like the snow  
To make this world one moment white;  
But some like starlight in the night.

*Peconic, 7-3-14*

## *EVE*

**I** SAW our surgeon and I know.  
There was white iris in his vase.  
Today I have begun to grow.  
I saw my mission in his face.

For I was wilful and perverse,  
A girl as giddy as the rest.  
And soon life's hunger I shall nurse,  
And feel his fingers on my breast.

I wondered as I walked the streets,  
Watching where other women stood,  
In whom this double pulsing beats,  
The holy word of Motherhood,

That stirred in me. And one I saw;  
Her face was strange and grave and sweet;  
A living letter of God's law.  
She was my sister in the street.

I met my mirror. Suddenly,  
I saw another standing there —  
Older than I. And I could see  
Her brow was drawn with pain and care.

Her lips were lovely, and her eyes,  
Mirrored all wisdom and delight.

Her lips were sweet as lullabies.  
Her face was wonderful and white.

Her arms were strong to hold me fast,  
While tears between my eyelids stole.  
She kissed me. And I know at last  
Today my body bears a soul.

*Peconic, 5-30-14*





## *ARTS*



## THE LEADER

FOUR more than four score bowmen, to wing the  
shafts of sound

My craft has gathered round me. My violins are  
drowned

By the sound of drums and brasses like an army's mightier  
guns.

And now to the highest circles of the crowded house  
there runs

My summons. I seize, I sway them, I lift them high, I  
hold

Two seconds; sound and silence. And each is made of  
gold.

And the beasts that lurk in blackness, and the powers  
of night draw back.

I was your spirit's leader. But little might I lack  
Of the God that fills my fingers, the truth that I trans-  
late.

I was a force for your breathlessness, and mastership of  
fate.

I have drilled the Devil's dance of death through the  
halls of huge hotels.

I have led the iron drums of war where the roar of battle  
swells.

I was a minnie-singer and music's man at arms,

Selling myself for a season to wealth that wastes and  
harms.

So have I gathered my bowmen, captains of five and ten,  
Haggled and cringed and hoarded to lift my head again.

I was the mind that made them. I am the will that  
calls,

Like a keyboard loud I played them. They trembled,  
hearts and walls

Till she came, my white soprano, and music's mouth  
indeed.

And her grace-notes glide and linger and I no longer  
lead.

I and my mercenaries have toiled and earned our truce  
We have swayed your hearts to silence and justified our  
use.

But her voice evokes the fairies whose fingers set men  
free

From folly and forgetfulness that fetter you and me.

I have mastered you and marshalled you. You hung  
upon my hand.

But high above my battlements of sound I see her stand,  
Like God's own herald proclaiming His terms of peace  
to all.

And I alone am kneeling in the shadow of the wall,  
For I, my birthright shaming, no nearer home may win;  
While to the very vault of heaven, her spirit enters in.

*New York, 12-15-12*

## THE RECITAL

THEY groped in darkness till they heard the harmonies of wind and seas.  
They felt the lilt of flying feet. They took the tune of water falls.  
They knew the notes of birds and all the hungry forest's harsher calls;  
Till from long terror and delight they learned their music by degrees.  
From war-drums throbbing through the night, from conches hoarse to Bacchus blown,  
From clashing brass that Cybele adored, each chord they made their own.

Dull nerves time tuned through centuries grew tense;  
raw voices clearer rang.  
Then came the masters. Ear and hand and brain conceived and caused to be,  
Till harp and drum were harmonized and harpsichord and spinet rang.  
They framed their formal scale of sound, they plotted curves of harmony,  
Made music's mathematics, wrote its formula and codified  
The truth life told them, note by note, its secrets that in silence hide.

They listened to the infinite and heard the Word that comprehends

All wisdom and all ecstasy; and faltering as children  
speak,

Fearing the voice revealed to them, they tried to tell what  
sound transcends.

Today the world that conquers fear and goes beyond  
where they were weak

Has no such singers. Here I sit and sound the scales  
of life today.

And I have power, and I have skill and I have hearing  
when I play.

I have an instrument intense and adequate, with nerves  
of steel

As the new world you live in now; a new projection of  
the hands

That flit like butterflies and fall like cataracts; that  
make you feel

The child's delight, the sea's unrest, the soul of love that  
understands

All sorrows and all mysteries on earth that makes us what  
we are:

The fragrance of the fading rose, the splendor of the  
falling star.

Something intangible I touch, new wireless messages  
translate,

I see their stories in your eyes, and on your trembling  
lips detect,  
The power I seize to sway your souls, to summon them to  
strive with fate,  
Till my piano, throbbing, drones a dynamo of intellect.  
And then I see those trembling hands that to life's limit  
drew so near,  
Ten fingers blind stretched out to God to bring one echo  
to your ear.

*Los Angeles, 11-17-13*



## *THE DEAD SCULPTOR*

**H**E might have been a mother. So  
He lived with life. In travail sore  
He brought to light the love he bore,  
And paid the debt all living owe.

He touched its substance. Tenderly  
He felt the spirit in the clay  
And gave it shape. Like hands that sway  
The keys that sound a symphony,

His fingers played with light and shade;  
Till in some splendid strength of line  
He made of matter chords divine  
That quiver ever. Life he weighed,

In human hands, as mothers hold  
Their babies' bodies to the light:  
As priests before their altar bright  
Lift up the host. The truth he told,

In one great, common mother tongue  
To all the world in praise and prayer.  
Men felt their burdens lifted where  
They found his heart forever young.

And still it beats in bronze and stone,  
And still he smiles in sculptured lips,

That whisper what his finger tips  
Caressed, divined, and made his own.

And still his soul in sleepless eyes  
Looks out at us and lives again:  
And past their night of prayer and pain  
Finds one last light where dying dies.

*Peconic, 6-13-14*

## THE SECRET

I CANNOT paint the gateway to our garden and  
July.

An arch of half trimmed cedar spars, a diamond blue of  
sky,

Between two long green trellises of grapevines. Over  
all

The little Rambler roses in their crimson thousands crawl.

Ten thousand crimson butterflies upon our arbor lit.

The sunbeams kiss their petals and the shadows softly  
flit

Through the gate that leads to gladness where blue lark-  
spurs bloom and sway.

White sweet Williams, purple centered, nod their welcome  
by the way.

There are honeysuckle hedges sweet, where yellow lips and  
white

Drink the dew drops, breathing morning back. Their  
lamps of pure delight

All the roses softly lighting on the altar of today

Flame aspiring, yield adoring, scent and color caught from  
clay.

I cannot paint the glory and the gladness. I can show  
Flakes of color, flecks of sunshine, shadows long, green  
trees below,

Where the pansies open eyes beneath small brows that  
seem to see

Straight and clear and everlasting, the secret lost to me.

I can only dream of rainbows, dead last year, today re-  
born;

I can only see lost sunsets, all the gates of night and  
morn,

Leaking out stray rays of glory, till I tremble: till one  
thrill

Of all life upon my canvas lies. The rest is dead and  
still:

Till a brooding robin singing, life interprets; and I seize  
Something of the droning, purring bliss of humming birds  
and bees;

Till two laughing children, calling, clasp their mother: and  
I know

Why the Lord of storms and perils sends His roses here to  
grow.

*Peconic, 6-24-14*

## THE TOUCHSTONE

**Y**ES, sculpture's hell from start to finish till at last  
The work shall stand alone; the dream your heart  
conceived  
To manhood's stature grown, the thought your brain  
received,  
The shape your hands have held, the life you felt, has  
passed  
Out of your agonies: until the stone is cut, the bronze is  
cast.

You write; your fountain pen your baton black transcribes,  
Thought's instant symphony, that for the few transcends  
All that we see or feel. You play. Your music rends  
Sparse heart strings tuned to it and ceases. All the tribes  
Of earth that heard you not, shall still to death resign  
their sordid bribes.

You paint; your magic wand, your screen of light may  
throw  
New luster glad on life, new shadows of the light  
That lives in every man, whose dreams you daub with  
night.  
You paint upon one plane. You trick us, and we know  
Most of all arts that fail on earth, to earth the darkest  
debt you owe.

Yet man may live through paint, where some strong soul  
is found

To vitalize its lure; as man through words may live,  
Through sounds, life's echoes faint. But we its substance  
give.

You make your medium slight, elusive. Truth profound  
You mirror or betray. But we who try to shape life in  
the round,

Our burden heavier is who deal with weightier things,  
With matter dull, inert, with cold and clogging clay.  
Life in the rough we shape, its husks we shred away:  
Its essence bring to light; till every flaw that clings  
Falls from our hands, that hold at last the truth that lives  
in stone that sings.

No soundingboard it needs, no roof, no study walls,  
From every angle seen, it stands in square and street.  
Each line as fine and clean as truth made fit to meet  
All; critic; child; each life that halts, that hopes, that  
crawls,  
To touch today's white monument of will that still to-  
morrow calls.

*Peconic, 7-12-14*

## THE SICK EDITOR

ONCE I was young and I trusted time, and my star  
rode far and high.

And art was life, and an editor was God's own ardent  
eye.

Now, day by day, each pleasant lie, each dearest dream  
must die.

Yesterday noon I was watching a gang of Dagoes at the  
pier

Where the city's waste is winnowed out. A lump of  
coal lay here.

Maybe a diamond lurked in this endless screen of sweep-  
ings drear.

Acres of wasted paper pass. My hook goes out to seize  
Some ragged smear of blood and mud, some scrap of aim-  
less ease,

Like a paper rose that a child has made. And you read  
such rags as these.

And the mills of God's infamies grind on. And copy  
ceaseless flows.

In farms and sweatshops grinding on, each tired typewriter  
goes.

And I see their frayed processions of faithless verse and  
prose.

God that has given us life to live and His words of life  
to say,  
God that our hearts so much forgive: did His heart fore-  
see this day,  
When He laid His kiss on the lips of Eve and He  
moulded Eden's clay?

And His little children of letters come, clever and still  
and shy.  
Some with a poet's prescience, some with want in each  
wide eye.  
And the tender lips grow tired and numb, and the dearest  
dreams must die.

Each is a bread line Edith says. And Edith's eyes see  
all.  
And I measure them out my alms of time. And day by  
day they crawl  
With their little shivering loves and hates through a hole  
in the office wall.

And the littlest, cleverest children of all that the weary  
souls of men  
Play with because they pass the time: they cash their  
checks, and then  
Some tired typewriter gets to work and wastes God's  
words again.



Once the morning stars together sang and life was fair  
and free,  
Fine as each line in Edith's hair when her stare turns  
back to me.  
For we are the slaves of swift success, and its sweepings,  
I and she.

And summer time is weeks away, and the mountains dim  
and far.  
And we all are heaps of crumbling clay. God's searchers  
gray we are  
Who toil to find one gem today, tonight to see one star.

*Paris, 4-8-14*

## ART IN THE SLUMS

**B**LINDLY you snatched at surfaces like children,  
Painted your prostitutes of money kings:  
There where you smeared life's face with rouge and  
powder.  
Lying, you trick today with trivial things.  
Art is an angel. You have bound her wings.

Art is the heart's long hunger for enduring.  
Art is the restless will that wrestles past  
Hunger and pain and loneliness in silence.  
Art is the faith that feasts where flesh must fast.  
Art is the soul that lives in strength at last:

Keen as a surgeon's scalpel, clean, unswerving,  
Seeking the truth that meets today's demands;  
Cleaving all surface lures, to seize the secret:  
Art is the brain that sees and understands.  
Art is the loving touch of tender hands.

You have not known her. You have smeared like children,  
Colors of greed, and sordid haste and shame;  
Colors that shriek for crowds upon the pavement;  
Pictures life tramples underfoot. Your fame  
Breaks like a bubble who blaspheme her name.

Art is a child. Its artist, like a mother,  
Suffers all things to bring this life to birth;

Nurses it, clasps it, loves it for a life time;  
Grows with it slowly, making sorrow mirth  
When art's long patience shall possess the earth.

Art is the service you have scorned, who blindly  
Snatched her least gifts. Her temple stands obscure,  
Far from the eyes of riches. All who sorrow  
See her in truth that stands while days endure.  
Art is God's gospel painted for the poor.

*Peconic, 6-29-14*

## THE CURATOR

MEMPHIS this mirror made immortal. I like to  
think of the smooth brown faces;  
A dancer's smile like the Nile in sunlight, a priest like  
the heads on his mummy cases;  
Placid and wise, unchanging, watching the life that comes  
and the life that goes,  
In little ripples that lapse forever the way that his smooth  
brown river flows,  
Life that rippled my dancer's lips when she bent from this  
bronze till she kissed a rose.

And her sister priestesses of Isis some old Egyptian lover  
painted,  
Tripping along by the Nile to the temple, like these Greek  
girls by grief untainted,  
In a fragment white of a frieze from Corinth, with their  
youth that the years can never kill.  
And we worshipped life till we made Madonnas. And  
we painted passions pure that thrill,  
Stirred by the growth of the god within them. I can  
see them smile in the shadow still.

Joy was always beautiful. Slowly beauty in sorrow we  
learned to render,  
Wistful lips with their pain prophetic making relentless  
truth more tender.

Then came Rembrandt and beauty in ruins found in the  
beggar, in faces old  
Warped by the storms of the barren seasons. Today you  
tell me that art is cold,  
Hearing no voice, seeing no visions; and art draws near  
to her age of gold.

Millions of years have mixed her pigments, savage dyes  
for her face preparing.  
Fear gave color. The shaman's symbols imaged a night  
full of fiends unsparing.  
Rough brown idols, blackened by bloodshed slowly shaped  
to the gods of Greece,  
White in the sun for one hour. And never has art yet  
won for her soul release.  
Art is a pilgrimage that ceases, only when life on this  
earth shall cease.

Now through these halls I can see them marching, pio-  
neers of her years unreckoned,  
Monks with their manuscripts illumined, masters old of  
one human second.  
Now we have made a new world in a minute, millionfold  
power remultiplied.  
You of your little faith who are fretful, look for your  
art your heart inside.

Art is the younger sister of science. Just so long shall  
her secrets hide.

Science is patience, art is her sister. Now we are testing  
her spectrum slowly.

Common things show in rarer colors, shed new light over  
streets unholy.

And the world is newly rich. It is dazzled by a myriad  
sudden and shifting goals.

And the blindest paint the harlots of millions, advertize  
art that must take its tolls

From surfeit and waste, while it toils with the toilers:  
till it sees, till it feels, till it fills men's souls.

*San Francisco, 11-30-13*

## PICTURES FOR MEN

**I** MUST paint pictures of men in a world of men  
that toil,

Men on bent masts at sea in the lee of the drip of oil,  
Lashed to a sea anchor; men in a ship in the grip of the  
frozen floes,

Blasting the ice into rainbowed hail: men where the  
grail in a stoke hole glows:

Men in full dories laboring homeward into the night  
through the gray water rows.

Men in the mines that drill until June swings round to  
June:

Stabbing the guts of earth with their bomb tipped steel  
harpoon:

Lashed by the fringe of a blast, falling where fire damp  
spreads:

Men that fall under our feet; men that drive over our  
heads;

Tracking the trail of the reeking rail and racing the  
storms through the gray watersheds.

Men in long cuts and fills in the forests; men in the  
mist,

Swinging wet girders home while the rusting cables twist,  
Locking the wards of the bridge; men whose new cities  
rise

Laying steel floor upon floor like bricks to bind the skies.  
Men that the quicksands have caged in the pit, where the  
last deep foundation its vortex defies.

Men at new motors of life, white as they skid through  
night:

Men on tall traveling cranes: in the subway's shuttles of  
light,

Men in dim submarines: men in a mob in the street  
Cleaving the crowds with their clashing gongs: men on  
the roofs, that meet

Dragging their hose over crashing walls, where the granite  
flows down the billows of heat.

Men that dissect the stars, divorce the atoms, where  
Plague in the test tube boils, men whose clear thought  
is prayer;

Men with the surgeon's knife cutting old sins away  
From the rotting limbs of life, till they stand to serve  
today.

I must paint pictures of men, of their hands, till my hands  
and pictures together shall pray.

Too long we have learned to play with art and life's  
laces and silk,

Meddled with women's skins and muddled with roses and  
milk;



And the world demands today a word of life at our  
hands.

And we may not turn away longer from life's demands.  
I shall paint pictures of masters that say how the soul  
of the street in its mastery stands.

*Peconic, 8-10-14*

## TRUTH

ALL the rest shall fall away,  
Flake and fade. But this alone  
Stands tomorrow and today  
Like God's statutes strong in stone.

Athens carved them slowly so,  
Florence flamed in bronze that lives;  
Gave their gods. The rest shall go.  
Time that nothing false forgives,

Tests your strength and sleight of hand,  
Racks your heart and rends your brain,  
Till your soul can understand  
All things perfect born of pain.

Every slight and sordid lie,  
Each black treason to the light,  
Every lesser lust shall die:  
Till your will glows still and white.

Envy, rancor, fear and pride,  
Praise that lures, and blame that brands,  
Failure faced and greed denied  
Fuse life's essence to your hands.

Then beneath your canvas glows,  
Through your bronze and marble thrills

Color fairer than the rose,  
Strength that shall outlast the hills.

Through your words a wisdom sings,  
That the world's last need demands:  
Until time your message brings  
To life's service sure that stands.

*Peconic, 8-1-14*



## *REGIONAL*



## *LITTLE BRIDES OF MARY*

**L**IKE the color of a dewdrop in the morning of the  
year,  
Like a bluebird heard in April on a note that's far and  
near,  
Like the blossoms white that catch the light where serried  
cherry trees  
Lift their snowdrifts up the hillside, petals trembling on  
the breeze:

They begin to bud and blossom in the mother's month  
of May,  
With their eyes of unwise angels, childish voices grave  
and gay:  
With their little childish footsteps, down the highways,  
through the streets  
Everywhere that France, that Paris their white litany  
repeats:

Childish voices put their questions, whisper words they  
never know,  
Where in Paris, where in peril, through perdition must  
we go?  
Who of us shall find perfection in the pallid paths of  
peace?  
Who in grime, and who in slime and bloodshed earn red  
life's release?

Who of us shall sin and stronger grow, so serve the Lord  
of all,  
Life the Moloch, life the maker of His stars and servants  
small;  
Life the master of our armies and the children's last  
crusade;  
Little petals white of worship, born today to fall and  
fade.

They are gone. The streets of Paris strike their strange  
and strident notes.  
Through their symphony of living something sacred sings  
and floats;  
Something that one sees at sunset, through the shadows  
of a shrine,  
In each small white altar light of love that dying makes  
divine.

*Paris, 5-20-13*



## THE HOST IN THE HILLS

YOU live in the shaded valleys; you die on the treeless  
plains:

And blind go down to darkness. Your dust alone re-  
mains.

You toil in the restless city. You choke in its stagnant  
smoke,

Though once to the light in a woman's eyes your strug-  
gling spirit woke:

Mount to the mounts of vision with a heart that hopes  
and thrills,

Though your breath shall fail as you take the trail to  
the highway of the hills:

To these old Italian cities that a wiser world has made,  
Where war and love were the workers, and art was the  
bride of trade,

And the lust of the brute was bondsman and master day  
and night,

Of Faith that found its God in flesh and bound each cross  
crowned height

With a chain of stone and story, where vine and olive climb  
Up through the time scarred summits, to blue skies un-  
touched by time.

Cortona's Citadel defies the years. Assisi here  
With Francis, God's good prodigal, the saints in heaven  
revere.

Perugia rears her ramparts proud, her griffin's nest of  
stone.

Foligno crests her holy height. Her houses gray have  
grown

Like lichens from the living rock. And like one starless  
sea,

Wave after wave the Apennines are wonderful and  
free.

Here is a world of wonder: no less where you shall go  
Through shaded lanes and court yards close, and love  
and labor know,

Where dead Etruscan husbandmen their terraced gardens  
piled;

Where Perugino taught his trade and Raphael toiled and  
smiled;

And goats that crop the hedges rear high beside the way:  
And young Admetus drives them forth from a world too  
old to play.

Toil upon ceaseless toiling these walls of giants laid,  
And stone on stone of truth they squared and set whose  
hands have made

Rampart and tower, and tomb and shrine. There priests  
and choirsters led

In long processions the host; but they who knelt and  
bled

To make their masonry the throne of God unknown on  
high;

Look where they left bare steps of stone to altars in the  
sky.

*Perugia, 6-21-13*

## KARMA

THROUGH the dying brazen booming of the throbbing temple bells,  
Through the streets of old Kyoto, to the hearts of living men,  
Runs a thinner note that waves, quavers, rises, sinks and swells;  
Till the drifting dust is shifting, dancing to a samisen.

*They were lovers in the springtime. They were happy for a night.  
For a day they lived like lovebirds born of light, of Buddha's smile,  
Walking where the cherry blossoms hid the world with walls of white.  
And the blossoms, falling, calling, whispered warnings all the while.*

*"O the agonies of lovers! He was poor and she a slave,  
Youngest in the Yoshiwara. All their years of youth we knew.  
Made one sword our key to midnight, lay together in the grave.  
Karma called us through the ages till we lived at last in you.*

*"O the agonies of lovers!" Though the singer's smile is old,*

Lustreless her lips, and sightless eyes that long have  
looked at pain,

Through her voice her heart revealing, like a slender wire  
of gold,

Steals a thrill of vital feeling calling souls to life again.

Through the faces gray and dying, through the old Kyoto  
streets,

Runs a trembling of old heart strings to her fingers worn  
and sure.

Of a million million lovers, each his love in April meets  
On the lips of girls around her, wistful, fair, and warm  
and pure.

*Kyoto, 12-31-13*

## BISKRA

GOD'S gray earth as God first made it, Biskra brings  
to you and me.

Round about the green oasis like a frozen, dusty sea,  
Hills and dunes surge on and halt. Here the French a  
desert found,

Went to work and built a railroad. Now the wheels go  
rolling round.

Down to Biskra from the mountains, down two slender  
strands of steel

Where the master of tomorrow strikes a note the nomads  
feel.

All the wires beside the rails that thrill with preludes  
strange and new,

Of the song today is singing; sound its tensions stern and  
true;

Stir the desert. Desolation wakes and living water flows  
Out of earth in wells artesian till the grayness greener  
grows.

Muddy irrigation ditches, ripples dull that leap and run,  
Spell the motives of tomorrow's larger life beneath the  
sun.

Biskra stirs, and life electric through her tents in tumult  
thrills,

Here the desert; there the sunlight feels the clash of mas-  
ter wills,

Stony hills where hell's huge seething cauldron fought to  
overflow;

Sandy dunes for æons drifting; now a stronger master  
know.

Man grows more. And men who blindly yesterday the  
line surveyed

Human brutes who bore its sleepers; God's own path to  
glory made.

Yesterday they scaled their levels, yesterday through tun-  
nels toiled,

Starved and suffered on the desert, saw their starkest ef-  
forts foiled;

Yesterday they won to water; dying slaked our thirst.  
And we

Down to Biskra, o'er the mountains bring unrest that stirs  
the sea;

Bring the city, bring the spirit of its struggles, of its sins;  
Life that creeps and life that soaring, still to wider wor-  
ship wins.

Biskra bows before its altars. Idle tourists stare and  
pass,

And the God unknown that made them sees each spread-  
ing growth of grass,

Sees new gardens; smiles; and slowly suns from utmost  
midnight draws,

Sends His light to man that slowly masters time's eternal  
laws.

Biskra smiles, and Biskra burns; and Biskra's arc-lights  
in the sand

Mark the trail where man goes marching till his soul  
shall understand.

*Algiers, 3-19-14*



## COVENT GARDEN

GRAY old Covent Garden bears its blossoms fair of  
song,

Bears its flowers in murky airs. They blossom all day  
long,

Free to all who chance to see. Here are bought and  
sold

Little living miracles of sunlight scented gold,  
Suns and stars and galaxies, yours to have and hold.

Incense of the dews and dawn drawn for many a mile,  
Come in slow procession while the gutter children smile.  
Beauty past the windows blind the plodding carters bring,  
Radiance of the rainbows mixed with all the airs of  
spring,

London's ancient offering to life, her lord and king.

English pink primroses that a drunken hag has pressed  
Close against her mask of pain to gain a moment's rest;  
Paler stars that shine where death his dirges slow recites,  
Roses red that women wear through golden days and  
nights,

Little laughing marigolds and violets, shy delights.

All are in the traffic that our motor marches through,  
Hooting through their fragrance on our way to Water-  
loo.

We have watched the magic of the moment that is May,

We have heard our morning mass; where London, grim  
and gray

Makes its sweetest offering to joy that dies today.

*S.S. St. Paul, 5-4-14*

## *THE SALESMAN*

YESTERDAY as I was waiting by the gate at Waterloo,

Came a porter with his load of trunks and slowly trucked them through.

And some were labelled Zanzibar, some Delagoa Bay,  
With a cricket bag high on the top, where the English  
work and play

Five thousand miles away from home as their fathers used  
to do.

And I wondered as I watched him if that porter ever  
thought

How he thrust an empire onward with the baggage that  
he brought

From that little northern island, that from pole to southern  
pole

Thrusts its outposts through the oceans, while the years  
like oceans roll

Around its crumbling fringes, till its final war is fought.

And I wondered if he pondered on new strikes for cent  
per cent,

On the rising cost of living and the higher cost of rent,  
If no gleam of sudden insight made his service seem di-  
vine,

If he saw he sent new pioneers on to fill the firing line  
Of England on its outposts in God's darkest continent.

I suppose he went on walking with no eye to look within  
On some book beyond the Bible that should make new  
    worlds begin  
In a Boer's benighted brain, and there perhaps he laid his  
    hands  
On God's messages of music that should bring divine  
    commands  
To some Kaffir in the desert with a soul to lose or win.

Possibly he saw the pictures of a painter's palette there,  
Or a surgeon's case of scalpels, bits of things that babies  
    wear,  
Fashioned by today's Madonnas with the prayers that  
    make divine  
Daily sacraments of living. So he trucked them down the  
    line,  
With his stolid stride and shoulders, shoulders big and  
    bowed and square.

Life today is mostly luggage. I sell motors for my pains.  
And I keep the traffic moving over mountains, over plains.  
My new models over oceans I go trucking; and I see  
Men and women marching in them, God's new models  
    that shall be  
Of tomorrow I am making while I wait for steamer  
    trains.

*S.S. St. Paul, 5-5-14*

## NATURE AND THE PIT

SATURDAY afternoon in June, I warm the countryside.

I paint the hills with purple. My arms I open wide.  
Saturday afternoon in June the playhouse and the halls  
Where the housetops hide the vistas, stifle my clearest  
calls.

And the little, pitiful people, single and double line,  
Shuffle and crawl along the wall. Without a world divine

Waits on the Surrey reaches, in Kentish woods and lanes.  
And little people huddle here, and hide from fear and  
pains.

A beggar whines along the line. A sick girl casts away  
Into his hat the coppers of her heart's last holiday.

They form them up in fours at last. They pass the wicket  
through.

London's last ragged regiment in tawdry dress review.  
Kismet! The curtain rises. The beggar whines and  
prays

Till Allah's will prepares for him at last his day of days.  
A harlot's lips are loosed in smiles as Hadji the cynic  
speaks.

And love has kindled rosy lights on a woman's wasted  
cheeks.

He grasps at gold and women. He fights his foes to  
kill.

Adventure wakes in eyes malign, and restless hands are  
still.

Kismet! The curtain falls as Allah's caliph's will is  
told,

The beggar banished. Hearts that flamed grow dull and  
cold and old.

And little various vices and sins in sordid shapes

Wait at the curb and watch for them. And men who  
once were apes

Have lost their hour of wonder as I my hour have lost.

You have made of me a harlot. Today you pay the  
cost.

You make my children cruel and tame, and trite and  
vile.

And out in the open spaces, I live and learn to smile.

You make my vagrants vermin, and I return their taints  
To the voices of your virgins and the visions of your  
saints.

You hunt me from the open and I steal and double past

The shadows black that shroud the pit to save you at the  
last.

*London, 4-20-14*

## *APRIL IN THE LUXEMBOURG*

**E**ARTH that slept is waking, stirring, parting veils of  
April rain,  
Thrusting back the clouds. And Paris feels her fresh-  
ness green again.  
Winds of March that hushed, have whispered. Smiling  
ripples idly stir  
Through the blue where birds are calling, falling. Day's  
first worshipper  
Calls the restless soul of Paris up to life and light with  
her.

God who made His earth a garden, made them man and  
woman there,  
Made the sky to be His shadow, made His flowers of  
April fair,  
Made the trees to be His temples, made the birds His  
heart to sing,  
Made His love to shape the issues of each least and living  
thing,  
Made His Paris for His pleasure, in His smile which is  
the spring.

Paris passes from the shadows. Through her streets of  
greed and shame  
Seeks His garden in the open, sees each tulip's torch of  
flame,

Goes to greet the sun her lover like the wind. With eye-  
lids wet

Leaning on her latest lover, every little midinette  
Smiles and hoards one hour of hope that all her life shall  
not forget:

Wakes by bird song from her garret, steals through shad-  
ows to today,

Where the winds with waving fountains from their cen-  
sers scatter spray;

Where the lilacs lift her eyelids, till the dawn has drawn  
her lips.

All things wonderful that women treasure up till love's  
eclipse,

Lift her till all life lies trembling at her trembling finger  
tips.

In the shadows he is waiting, small and furtive, mean and  
old,

But his heart mounts up to meet her, there to share her  
hour of gold.

There she holds her Host to Heaven. For one hour  
there glorified

She is Eve in God's own garden, she whose son for sin-  
ners died;

Till the iron wheels of Paris grind to dust the day out-  
side.

*Paris, 4-23-14*



## *SOLDIERS OF LIFE*

**I** HAVE finished my regular stint at last, I have written  
my thousand words today,  
Ranged my last regiment raw in ranks, drilled them and  
driven them down their way.  
Sent them to reinforce the rest till my book is an army  
made complete.  
And sudden, the sound of a bugle blast peals through the  
rush of this Paris street.

Thrilling the length of the boulevard, twenty-four trum-  
pets of brass begin,  
Where the houses stand in two ranks on guard, to blare  
through the traffic, their way to win.  
Cleaving the press like the point of a lance, through a  
mist that melts, through a drizzle of rain,  
Soldiers of France into light advance, and the sun leaps  
out into sight again.

Nearer and nearer the columns come, longer and longer  
stretches the line,  
Faster and faster beat the drums, the red legs twinkle, the  
bayonets shine,  
And Paris wakes out of her mid-day trance, her pulses  
quicken, her eyeballs gleam,  
And she halts and huzzas for her soldiers of France, and  
a song in steel, and a scarlet dream.

Soldiers of France, you are mine today, and I stand at my  
window and heart and hand,  
Crippled and halt, hidden away, leap up at the light of  
your fatherland,  
At the red in her blood, at the lilt in her voice, at the song  
of freedom for all she sings,  
Soldiers of France, march on, rejoice till they fester and  
fall, all their pestilent kings.

Soldiers of France on the last frontiers of life and freedom  
through jungles dark,  
You are pioneers, and you blaze the way for us who halt  
in our homes and mark  
The sweat you shed, and the blood that's red, and the dead  
and dying that thread your trails.  
Blood of the legions Napoleon led, that Cæsar summoned,  
France never fails.

Battered and bloody she sinks to her knees, till with one  
hand on her mother earth,  
Splendid and sure through the smoke she sees beyond the  
battle, new freedom's battle.  
We who are waging our war with words, on faith and  
freedom's final frontiers,  
We are your brothers, her spirit's heirs; for us a vision, a  
voice appears.

Jehanne, the saint and the soldier maid, and the soul of  
France and her soldiers still,  
Battered and bleeding and unafraid, she lives in Paris our  
hearts to thrill.  
Still in the sunset her spirit stands on its pyre of fire, on  
the Martyr's hill.  
Soldiers of France, though we die alone, while we halt  
by the side of your Mount Parnasse,  
While we read the leaves of your book of stone, till in  
the shadows all passions pass.  
We may win to the wonder round the throne, to her walls  
of onyx, her towers of glass.

*Paris, 5-10-13*

## EMIGRANTS

WHITECHAPEL courts were killing us where fog  
and smoke choke children's breath.  
The Argentine had stripped our farms. Our England  
slowly starved to death.  
A letter came from Edmonton. We saw a poster in the  
Strand;  
Like pavement pictures crude, of chalk, we planned our  
people's Promised Land.  
When debts and drink had dragged us down to Surrey  
docks where drop lights shine  
Through glades of steel, they stripped away our sickest  
while we stood in line.

One judgment day was done with. So your transport  
took us down your stream;  
Your raw recruits of life, to go where snow peaks glow,  
where rapids gleam,  
Past Greenwich, Sheerness, out to sea we steamed. We  
left the Foreland light.  
We lost the Lizard. Suddenly to England gone we said  
goodnight.  
And winds and waves were shaping us to stand or fall  
in England's fight.

From fog, from steerage slime we came. One sunset's  
flames lit Newfoundland,

Our babes, our women, open-eyed saw land draw near on  
either hand,  
They fed us through their mill again at Montreal. We  
caught the cars.  
And fast and faster rolled away to where the mountains  
meet the stars.

They spilled us o'er the prairie floor at sidings lone,  
Saskatchewan  
Took toll of us, Alberta more. But still our strongest  
hearts held on,  
Till our last truck had topped the grade. We clanking  
faster forth to sea  
Like batteries hurled down to battle, found new frontiers  
of destiny.

The mountain's province and the coast had called us to  
their firing line,  
All England and the White Man's host to reinforce.  
Where yonder pine  
Towers two hundred feet above the pass, our viking chil-  
dren play  
Clear eyed, surefooted, strong of hand, to save your slaves  
of yesterday,  
Your ulcer cities in the east that eat the white man's  
strength away.

Our fathers held our Northland hills and woods, and ruled  
her restless sea.  
And South, and West and East they went and carved your  
charts whose hearts were free,  
Numidia sacked, Byzantium and Asia scourged. Our  
sons today  
Before the yellow legions come with long ships westward  
shall away,  
Till in the final war of all, down from the pole, around  
the world, flying like eagles to the feast,  
Shades of old Vikings sentries call our Northland squad-  
rons sunset hurled, their airship arrows aiming east.

*S.S. Scotian, 7-29-13*

*THE OPEN QUESTION*





## THE OPEN QUESTION

WHEN I am dead and gone, sweetheart, this restless  
world shall be

A little darker, emptier, more drear, a little space;  
Till life that gave you grace to love shall teach your eyes  
to see

A little more, a moment dear, before they fill your place.

And if I knew the end of all, the hour my light went out;  
Tomorrow or tonight maybe — you wonder what I'd do;  
And should I march alone to death and meet him with a  
shout;

Or should I shudder here at home and creep and cling to  
you?

You could not love a coward, dear, if war were round our  
walls.

And war is ever round the world, and all God's soldiers  
go

Up to the last grim firing line, and each in order falls.  
I could not love your life alone, nor mine, to lose it so.

Tonight may be the end of all. And after, no one knows.  
I cannot hide my candle end and hoard for us alone,  
When souls are sinking in the storm, from every gust that  
blows

The God in me that must attain, this talent still my own.

And if the end is near or far, and if we live or die  
Beyond the blackness, matters not so long as in your  
sight

I have stood up unterrified; and learned to testify  
To all the million flames of God that mount to meet the  
night.

*New York, 11-19-12*

## *SURVIVAL*

**L**IFE'S procession, starting, struggling, whence and  
how and why and where;  
Out of sea ooze, out of ether, out of night, that stair by  
stair,  
Climbs to light; that suddenly is lost in darkness and  
despair:

Those we love that out of shadows, from the blackness of  
the womb,  
From the mists of distance drifting, limned with light  
against the gloom,  
Grow so near and warm and dear, until the midnight  
makes their tomb:

All the march of men that started in slow atoms from the  
sea,  
Fast and faster strives today to disappear eternally;  
To its sea cliff sweeps. And then like all those others must  
we be?

All the march of man, the millions shouldered nearer to  
the pit,  
Selling life for threadbare hours of toil and slumber, slow,  
unfit,  
Starving, sick, blind, shuddering, to the black tide of night  
submit.

At that sea cliff's edge the strong, the shrewd, the brave,  
the tried, the true;  
All that urged our life along, the souls that held their stars  
in view;  
All that met life with a song and smiled at death, must  
vanish too.

But the multitudes are building, hour by hour and year by  
year,  
Piers, approaches, to the pit, the ford, the strait. They  
disappear.  
So the corals conquered ocean; so men bring new manhood  
near.

Underground and under ocean, under air and under soul,  
Men are toiling, building, making piers and stairs. Each  
human mole  
Caged in caissons, drives his tunnel towards the spirit's  
path and goal.

Men are toiling, men are making piers and bridges, mo-  
tors, wings.  
Airships soar and lift our eyes and hearts to dream diviner  
things.  
Lonely scouts of science lead us toward the truth tomorrow  
brings.

Here a surgeon, here a chemist, scales and holds his mountain height;

Reaches out and lifts the race another inch from death and night:

Dies and goes to scale his snow peaks, stars and mountain tops of light.

Others delving deeper still in souls of men life's essence see.

Wireless messages of love they code, till immortality

Is made a motor state of mind and the first function of the free.

*New York, 6-1-12*

## HEART OF FIRE

WE made a fire place in the night,  
A house of life to keep us warm.  
We made a home to hold our light  
Through hours of darkness, cold and storm.

And there before our hearth we sit.  
And visions there and dreams of gold  
We share, while sparks like seconds flit,  
And hour by hour our youth grows cold.

So hold me close and closer here;  
While like two faggots, one clear flame  
Our moment makes immortal, dear;  
And radiant; (For this cause we came,

Out of the atoms where the stars  
Are sparks that fade and night is long.)  
And listen! till in fiery bars  
A fallen forest leaps to song.

Its golden lilt and lullaby  
Is like your happy heart, that clings  
To glories gleaned in days gone by,  
And fancies from forgotten springs:

A fallen forest of the years,  
We heap its embers here tonight

Till in the heart of fire appears  
All loveliness that lives in light.

It leaps, it lures, it wreathes your lips  
With spirit kisses, till your eyes  
Are fires that laugh at love's eclipse,—  
And flaming swords of Paradise.—  
Till slowly from my fingers slips  
A loveliness that never dies.

*Peconic, 4-21-13*

## THE LAST VISTA

OVER the hills the vista lay  
Unexplored, till the rain today  
Woke in me sombre and savage unrest;  
Till over the crest of the hill I pressed.

Camps of my dreams where dawn was red  
On a world of wonder's watershed,  
All were ended. The world grew dim  
In a valley gray and a daylight grim.

Life is a limbo of lies, I thought,  
Where the bravest vision is brought to naught;  
And we follow its vistas vague, in vain,  
Into midnight's mist and the restless rain.

And the years they trick us; and one by one  
They steal our dreams till the last is done.  
So I doubted. But soon, my dear,  
Your hands on my eyelids lay warm and near.

"Follow me forward and fast," you cried,  
"And look when I let you." Open eyed  
I saw your lips and the laughter there,  
And a star like a gem that graced your hair:

That a hand in the night had suddenly set  
Barely above you. Men forget



The rain of the stars where night and day  
We and our world are whirled away;

And the playmate tender and tried and true;  
Death and your lover, who comes to you,  
Leads you a little, and lets you see  
The best of your dreams that is yet to be.

*New York, 12-12-12*

## *SANCTUARY*

**T**O her empty house today  
Like a gray deserted shrine,  
From Broadway I turn away  
To my spirit's bread and wine.

Here Boldini painted her  
When the century began:  
Felt one honest impulse stir;  
For one hour was more than man.

Mother, he came close to you,  
Caught the truth your eyes conceived,  
On your lips its summons knew,  
For one hour in life believed.

I have sinned to snatch success,  
And my heart is hard and old.  
All my millions make me less,  
All my wisdom makes me cold.

I shall toil until the end.  
One by one, where none can know,  
Wife and work, and faith and friend;  
Last of all your love shall go.

Darkness ends our dying eyes.  
In my weakness here I cleave

To the old eternal lies.  
For one hour I would believe :

Where life lauds her king of kings ;  
There your spirit on her knees, ·  
Whispers still eternal things ;  
Out of eyes immortal sees.

*Port Said, 2-19-14*

## MARKING TIME

LIFE, my lad, is one long wait, after another. Soon  
or late  
You'll run up against this rock, or a slimier, slower  
shock,  
Mud or sand that clogs the Road. If you're wise you'll  
shift your load,  
Poetize, philosophize. One each weary sinew tries;  
Armor, motor, grit or brain. One sees brother souls in  
pain,  
Fallen from life's firing-line; tells himself, "This chance  
is mine;  
From my task this tithe to take; in another's eyes to  
wake  
Faith reborn and manhood stark, mightier than the shore-  
less dark."  
One at stragglers swears; or sings; cowards back to tri-  
umph brings.

Life, my dear, is dark with pain. Light casts shadow.  
Heart and brain,  
Flesh and soul through travail pangs win their own.  
Your city clangs,  
God's grim anvil. Hammers beat, to the tune that end-  
less feet  
Since Creation's dawn began to repeat, the March of  
Man;

Lilting to the pulse of life. Honor's pilgrims, Love and  
Strife,  
Lead our leaders. Here we stay, while they wrestle by  
the way.

Some shall stray. Life's soldier halts. Though he swears  
at some one's faults,  
From his ranks he never breaks till the Word the column  
shakes,  
Or a bullet brings release. Life is war. The paths of  
peace  
Lead through pleasant places till some one breaks the  
truce. And still  
Through the love outlasting joy, babes are born and girl  
and boy  
God's last broken ranks renew. And the black battalions  
too  
Night by night their slaves recruit. Life's a fight, or lust  
and loot.

Life's a wave that comes and goes. Life's a wind that lulls  
and blows.  
Life's breath, a laugh, a sigh. Life's a journey till we  
die;  
Days our mile posts, white or gray; nights their shadows.  
Now, today,

Life's an endless mountain climb. Though you've halted,  
marking time;

Lovelier vistas one by one, larger light from sun to sun,  
Older soldiers win for you. Mist and murk obscured  
your view.

Strangling wreaths of battle smoke. That was nothing.  
Then you woke.

Death was done. For life's a fight, on forever up to  
Light.

*New York, 4-22-12*

## THE SOUL HUNTER

WE sought life between the suns and ranging far  
through starless night,  
Out of chaos swarmed to form, and out of blindness groped  
to sight.  
We went seeking through the ages. Wasting æons wore  
away  
One by one the husks that hid the heat that warmed our  
wasting clay;  
Till man, naked, from his caves came creeping to the light  
of day.

Life through travail pangs of planets, bore his body, made  
it strong;  
Out of weakness wrought his wisdom. Glacial pressure  
hard and long  
Held him close to lava fires until his brain blazed forth in  
light;  
Till red fear had forced him forth to war with cold and  
storm and night;  
Fears that filled his eyes, his ears, and forced his shaking  
hands to fight.

He made gods of fear and shadows; gods unsparing and  
unknown;  
Gods of greed and lust and hatred; gods with hearts and  
hands of stone;

Gods of all that crushed and scourged and gnawed without  
him and within;  
Gods of sickness, gods of sorrow, gods of darkness breeding sin;  
Gods of life that thrust him forth to light, a larger life to win.

Gods of tenderness, that failed him; gods of hope that  
heard his prayer;  
Gods of pity that betrayed him; gods of love that let  
despair  
Leave its world for lost, and shrinking in the night hold  
one sick soul,  
As a mother holds one child, worth all the world. And  
while he stole  
For a slave's slow spirit strength; all men were marching  
to their goal.

Miser souls one altar candle watched in fear; and suddenly  
Life that lends the suns to space and sends new light to  
eyes that see,  
Lifted up the mind of man to stars unborn he certifies;  
Set men sounding life's last depth; and taught our surgeons  
to devise  
Scalpels new that death's dark heart dissect, till truth is  
torn from lies.



Once man sought his soul in darkness as a babe is born in  
pain.

Now man's manhood leaps to light like search lights stab-  
bing storm and rain;

Reaching out to wider service; toiling on eternity;

Dying, giving something living, larger life more fit to be;

To one soul of all the world, that cell by cell from hell  
goes free.

*New York, 7-11-14*

## *TOMORROW*

**I** WOKE from dreams of him today. I heard  
Beyond these four close cage-like walls, the summons of a bird  
Into the garden's fragrance and the breath before the dawn.  
Then from the womb of morning and the doors of death withdrawn,  
Another life, another light, leapt forth to quicken the earth and sky;  
Another April day was born too wonderful, too fair to die.

"David is dead," they told me yesterday.  
At twilight I looked out at death. And these dim hillsides gray  
Where once we walked in splendor were like ashes of the earth.  
Today he lives in me once more. The spring, the sunlight's birth  
Are nature's tongues to tell me that his life could not be lost.  
And then the birds began to come. How many leagues of air they crossed,  
How many miles of land and seas their tireless questing carried here,  
Back to our garden's apple trees to nest and breed another year!

David has gone but only gone before.  
Our souls are birds of passage that must fly forever more  
Across the weary seas of space from star to farther star.  
And shall we not come back again to where our gardens  
are,  
Our homes, our children's children, in this little nest of  
earth  
In our corner of God's garden, where the planets leap to  
birth  
Like His flowers of flame forever; and where the meteors  
all  
Fade like petals of perfection through the spirit's spring  
and fall?

Had he only left me children — but the children of his  
dreams  
I shall bear and rear and care for; till our home, our garden  
seems  
Just a tryst of life, of spirit memories that never die;  
Birds of passage year by year that April's radiance glorify.  
Whether comes a happier lover, larger life to me to give;  
Or at heart a widow ever, I in other children live,  
All he was and willed, undying, I shall cherish till I see  
Eyes and lips that laughing, crying, David's love bring  
back to me.

*S.S. Friedrich der Grosse, 9-4-12*

## *PRACTICAL PEOPLE*

**Y**OU have lost beauty and delight and worlds of wonder wild and real.

You have forgotten everything the child and savage see and feel.

You wrap your thoughts in threadbare words. The blurring types of your machine

Your feelings faint in faded patterns print, your starless nights between.

For truth eternal, naked, new as sunrise or a baby's smile,  
Your hearts too hard to tremble to, hide in some dusty letter file.

Your minds are mirrors of the streets, your eyes in ledgers lost, survey,

Like columns to be added through, year after year, each sordid day.

Your feet in coffins black have died to the fresh touch of turf and dew,

Your hands that here typewriters plied too long, lose hold of life. To you

Joy that with jewels threads each hour, that makes a miracle supreme

Of every weed and wayside flower, is dead as yesterday's dead dream.

When comes a voice to vitalize blood that o'er mountains  
used to run?

What vision serves to quicken eyes that saw huge seas  
that drowned the sun?

What message stirs the ears that heard the sea peaks  
splintered, undismayed?

What warmth shall light the embers cold that into silence  
fall and fade?

You shun the sunlight who the air of heaven in houses  
dark defile,

You have forgotten gladness there; to run, to wrestle,  
shout and smile.

Adventure clamors at your gates. You shut her out  
where comfort crawls.

You hump your back above your books. You waste your  
lives in rotting walls.

For you have made of printer's ink a serpent in whose  
paper coils

Your souls are crushed. You hide away the wealth that  
stifles, wastes, and spoils.

All heaven and earth you use today to drown yourselves  
in dollar bills.

When will you ever stop to play with morning marching  
up the hills?

When will your bloodless spirits guess the wonder in one  
grain of sand,  
One spark of fire; the tenderness in one girl's smile, one  
child's warm hand;  
The rapture in one robin's song, one rose, one moonrise  
after rain?  
You who to blackness here belong, can souls like yours be  
born again?

*Peconic, N. Y., 7-22-14*

## TOYLAND

THERE'S a little Jew cash girl that comes and  
stares

At my toys for little near-millionaires,  
Motor cars, battleships, aeroplanes,  
That you wind with a key, every day that it rains.  
When she looks at the dolls it's like saying your prayers.

Mimi from Paris the star of the show  
Squeaks out her name when one squeezes her, so.  
Now if I was one of that high brow bunch  
Of better than thou dames, I've got a hunch  
I'd have bought her for Becky a long time ago.

I've got a snap shot. Say, wouldn't she be  
Fuller of joy than a bird on a tree?  
Maybe the tips of her toes wouldn't sing.  
There was a kiddie got hers here last spring:  
Kissed the doll blind. Then she tried to kiss me.

Now it's December and hell's here to stay  
Three blessed weeks. Folks ain't Christians today.  
People like sheep keep forgetting the Child;  
Till the mob starts to make a good and runs wild;  
And the rush in our aisles would scare any subway.

Heaven's a fairy tale. Last night I dreamed  
There was toyland in heaven where star drop lights  
gleamed

On women, that prayed for girl babies and boys,  
The way little Becky wants dollies and toys.  
There were sales-lady angels — so silly it seemed.

*Peconic, 7-31-14*



*PAIN*



## THE CANCER WARD

THEY nurse their bullets in their breasts where  
babies' blissful lips have hung.  
On cheeks that lovers' lips caressed, the livid wounds of  
life lie bare.  
In eyes that harbored happiness, where pain has long out-  
lived despair,  
The last dumb terror of the brute that lurks and wakes  
and slumbers there,  
Draws near to death and cannot die; and murders prayer.  
You too were young.

Poets have sung to you perhaps. Your lover's prayers  
you once disdained.  
But you were pure and pitiful and perfect as the drifted  
snow  
That hides a little garden plot, the ward's last window  
far below,  
Where winter prunes his roses red. And you were born  
the brute to know  
That masters man, and makes of him a spirit stained, that  
earth has chained.

A drunkard beat you on the breast. A saint has touched  
your finger tips.  
A hero's hands your heart have pressed. For you have  
lived and you have learned

Of joy and pain to savor life. And you have languished,  
you have yearned,  
And you have thrilled through ecstasies. And you have  
snatched at joys unearned.  
And you till dust to dust returned, have smiled with true  
and trembling lips.

Brave heart behind the sheeted screen: dull lives that still  
to ashes fall:  
Flesh where one cinder eating all, one throbbing ache for  
all you lost,  
Alone alive, forswears the prayers a nursing sister breathes  
across  
A gulf as great as Dives saw: the fire of life your em-  
bers cost;  
You who were rich and radiant: you who like Lazarus  
lost all.

No heaven hereafter waits for you. In life alone is your  
reward.  
But beauty wavers in one smile that meets the weary  
watcher's eyes,  
And loveliness may waken love as strong as life that never  
dies.  
A second's sick surcease from pain has made a poignant  
paradise.

And out of horror springs a hope; and healing brings  
from things abhorred.

*The armies of the nations march: the singers of the na-  
tions see;*

*The surgeons of the nations hear in pain a life that  
labors long;*

*Till master minds of science find its antitoxins sure and  
strong:*

*Till suffering a symphony is made, a mighty marching  
song:*

*Till from the spirit's agonies is born the better day to be.*

*Paris, 5-11-13*

## *CHRIST IN THE ASYLUM*

THE long excursion train has stopped and slowly  
through the snow,  
Through Sunday morning's holiness of woods and hills  
they go;  
The black procession of the poor, to see their sick to-  
day.  
Some carry tawdry Christmas gifts. Some dumb lips  
try to pray.

For Christ has come to Hades here, to herd with the  
insane,  
Since we evict Him from the Church and crown Him  
from the brain.  
Our modern minds His faith forget. But here are hearts  
as old  
As hunger, pain and horror, and hopelessness and cold.

The winter sun between the bars as merciless as time  
Betrays the faces marred and scarred, reveals the years'  
gray grime;  
The women old that God forgot, that man has wasted  
here,  
The faces of defeat and death, the eyes of endless fear.

One plucks a rose to pieces. One stooping, squinting  
crone

Who wears a rag bag on her back, grins at a grama-  
phone,

One hugs a squalid doll and whines, and watches hours  
that were,

When laughter and all loveliness her children shared  
with her.

O mad Madonna of the slums that some one loved and  
lost;

Gray ghosts and failures of us all: O souls success has  
cost;

There runs a whisper through the wards to lighten lives  
forlorn.

Today of some dead prostitute a child to us is born.

Today the foul, the piteous, the shyster and the shrew,  
With remnants of life's bargain sales make offerings to  
you.

They fill this fester spot with flowers. They make their  
morgue a shrine.

For they are pilgrims poor of love, that lost is still  
divine.

*King's Park, L. I., 12-28-12*

## MILL CHILDREN

WE have forgotten how to sing. Our laughter is  
a godless thing: listless and loud and shrill and  
sly.

We have forgotten how to smile. Our lips, our voices  
are too vile. For each of us, a living lie,  
Each old, each cold, each carnal face is childhood's death  
and black disgrace. We all are dead before we die.

Our mothers' mothers made us so. The fathers that we  
never know, in blindness and in wantonness,  
Caused us to come to question you. What is it that you  
others do, that profit so by our distress?

If all your millions made the mill, why is it then that  
never still it murders us, both day and night?

You and your little children sleep. We and our mothers  
vigil keep. You cheated us of all delight.

Ere our sick spirits came to birth you made our fair  
and fruitful earth, a nest of pestilence and blight.

Your black machines are never still, and hard, relent-  
less as your will, they card us like the cotton waste.  
And flesh and blood more cheap than they, they seize and  
eat and shred away, to feed the fever of your haste.

For we are waste and shoddy here, who know no god, no  
faith but fear; no happiness, no hope but sleep.



Half imbecile and half obscene we sit and tend each tense  
machine, too sick to sigh, too tired to weep,  
Until the tortured end of day, when fevered faces turn  
away, to see the stars from blackness leap.

Hardest of all is this to bear, that somewhere in the upper  
air, there may be heaven we never know.  
Beyond the blackness children may from dreams of love  
look up to-day to hear their mothers whisper low.

But here the mill's unbending roar, calls us and curses  
more and more, God's curse on men who know  
Him not.

And night and morn to the Most High, we march  
God's conscripts born to die, till love at last  
makes bright our lot:

Till in the shapes of filth and fear that you have starved  
and stolen here, you find the children God for-  
got.

*Peconic, 9-18-13*

## GUTTER SLIME

**W**E are your wounds.

We are your fevers and festering sores, and your failures and faults;

Sick in field hospitals, stragglers, camp followers foul, where life's long column halts;

Where your cities are camps, treasure heaps of the ages you looted, of earth that your strong men despoil.

And you sit on their summits. We creep round the edges and snarl at your sentinels. Starving we toil.

We are defeat.

We are the danger, the germs in the street, in the food that you eat at your ease.

We are disease that is lying in wait for the weak, for your children. We faint and we freeze.

We drink and we fall in the gutters. We crawl in the gutters. We crawl and we fall where you left us to crawl and fall.

And the drink and the drugs that you sell us shall surfeit you too till you pay for us all.

We are despair.

We are past prayer. We are horror that hopelessly shudders and dies in the dark;

Hunger and hate and black shame that comes back to you making its mark,

Blasting your sons; the sick pain of dumb beasts, and  
strong sorrow gone mad.

We are your weakness you waste. Shall we ever look  
up at last, learn to be glad?

We are your goal.

For your soul that you starve, when you starve us shall  
cease to be blind,

And your mind that you madden with haste, something  
mightier shall find

Than the money that crushes us down, that distorts, that  
shall cripple you too,

Till you learn to believe in the least of us, serving a  
gospel made new.

We are your God in the germ, till we suffer and struggle  
with you,

Out of the slime to make soul.

*Peconic, 9-19-13*

## CAMP FOLLOWERS

ONCE we were as you were, children, cherished,  
prayed for, born to bless;  
Bought with pain and labor lasting, white as April snow  
is white;  
Fragrant as a bed of roses, living lips of happiness  
Moulded by a mother's kisses; eyes of laughter and  
delight.  
But that beauty faded early as the snowflakes in the  
night.

Once we were as you were, women, beasts of burden for  
the race;  
Slaves by caves and cords imprisoned till our masters  
dared to sleep.  
So we bore them stronger warriors, found a surer hiding  
place.  
And the flame of life flashed upward and the ape forgot  
to creep,  
And the mothers of our mothers learned at last to love  
and weep.

Once we walked in folk migrations, once with emperors  
we rode;  
Mistresses of mighty monarchs ordering the world's ad-  
vance.  
Once we taught all art to triumph, in your temples we  
abode.

Once we smiled at minnie-singers, ordered love to lift  
his lance,  
Setting armored squadrons spurring at a whisper or a  
glance.

Once we were like flames devouring flinging men across  
the sea,  
Licking gold from Montezumas; gold that we divide  
today  
With the men that death subduing share their spoils with  
you and me —  
You the nun, the saint, the matron; you the wife he  
hides away;  
You his body bearing children; I his mind to mount and  
play.

You may pray in guarded houses. We go following his  
camps—  
For us both he fights and triumphs. We have shared  
his sorest need.  
Through the deserts pioneering, where defeat his ashes  
stamps,  
Still his farthest watch fires sharing we shall nurse with  
hands that bleed  
Sinking flames of life that falter. Deeper in his heart  
we read.

You despise us, you abhor us. But you copy us today,  
Wear our dresses, learn our dances, paint your flesh that  
we despise,

Like our own. In turn your children one by one we  
lure away.

And each lonely lost street walker of the nations in our  
eyes

Is a sentinel of heaven's host advancing to the skies.

*New York, 1-15-12*

## *THE BREAD LINE*

**W**HEN winter has besieged the world with want  
and storm and snow,  
And hail like bullets sweeps the street, and winds begin  
to blow  
Like roaring ranks of ruin loud at twilight: Corporal  
Cold  
And Captain Hunger line us up, sick boys and men as  
old  
As the dead hopes that once we hugged, the ghosts of  
loves we sold.

For some of us, the happy ones, this is the last review;  
The last inspection of a life. This brother, man, is  
you;  
This hulk that coughs his heart, his hope, his heaven,  
his hell away.  
For you whose god lies lapped in lace, whose harlot's  
hands betray  
All manhood; here, when midnight strikes, tonight is  
judgment day.

For cold shall search us pore by pore; each cell that sin  
has tried,  
That pain and fear and sickness scourged, that hunger  
crucified.  
It stiffens us. In rigid ranks we shuffle, marking time,

Till from your church where Christ is cold, there sounds  
a silver chime.

Till one by one, our rations drawn, the slum takes back  
its slime.

But even so for some of us whose souls are sinking here,  
There comes a glow that heats the heart through frozen  
hours of fear.

A vision floats and forms for us through bar room fumes,  
and where

Your coppers club us into holes where sewage fills the  
air,

Where vice and vermin eat us up; you too who drove us  
there.

We see you on your sick beds then, your sons and  
daughters too,

Drawing near to fear, to midnight, to the Devil's dread  
review.

And you rave and cry for rations, drops of drugs, a  
woman's tears

As slowly strained, lost words of love. That vision  
disappears

While we shuffle through the snow drifts and the seconds  
slow as years.



For the armies of Messiah march unresting day and night,  
Out of darkness, from the jungles, from your cities up  
to light.

Out of hospitals, from sweat shops, out of dive and mine  
and mill,

Spent and wasted we are marching past the last frontiers  
of will,

Where the last grim Surgeon sifts us; where you shrink  
and shudder still.

*S.S. Chicago, 4-15-13*

## THE LOCK-STEP

THERE'S the warden's little toddler at a window  
in the sun,  
Looking down and laughing at us as we pass him one  
by one.  
And I wonder if he wonders why we never stride or run.

There are tears and cries and anguish when a baby comes  
to birth;  
When he breaks his way from prison. He may murder  
all your mirth,  
He may kill your best and dearest, yet you yield him all  
the earth.

And he stumbled as we stumbled. And he trembles as  
he tries  
To come closer to his mother, till his eyes adore her  
eyes.  
And you lift him when he's crawling till he's looking at  
the skies.

If he's soiled and hurt and hungry, he is dearer to her  
then,  
Dearer since in her he suffers. We were babies more  
than men,  
And we blundered forth to freedom till you beat us back  
again.

You are children. You are cruel. Yesterday you had  
to crawl.

Out of mud the ages made us. And today a bar, a  
wall,

Is the only thing that damns us and divides us from you  
all.

We are conscripts of consumption and perdition, drawn  
by lot,

That you drill and waste and murder in your barracks  
black that rot.

We are fear you make your fetish, wounded souls your  
faith forgot.

Make your prisons of tomorrow a white hospital of  
life.

Here today is Satan's cloister. Here you sharpen every  
knife.

Here you hide the black byproducts of your greed and  
lust and strife.

You go limping through a lockstep long as ours. But  
this we know:

Hopes forlorn of life go creeping till its black Bastile  
shall go,

Till our bodies fill the ditch, our wrongs its walls shall  
overthrow.

And the warden's baby watching us is wiser far than  
you

For he knows light kindles light. He smiles and some  
of us smile too.

For he knows that life is lovely—life our murdered boy-  
hood knew.

*Los Angeles, 13-24-13*

## IN HOSPITAL

**B**ECAUSE my mother's blood was thin,  
My father, life's young spendthrift, I,  
The child of sickness old as sin,  
Here year by year in prison lie.

We have a chapel, white and still,  
A nunnery whose litanies  
In pain's long service swell and thrill;  
And I am weary, Lord, of these.

Pain was my sister. Silently  
I hugged her to my baby breast,  
Until I learned her smile to see  
As closer still her child she pressed.

Today her fingers come and go.  
They numb my pulses, as the night  
Weighs down the noon. I never know  
The wonders of your world of light.

I see the sheeted bodies pass,  
To life's last altar, or the place  
Where the white surgeons say their mass,  
And break life's body for the race.

This is our sacrifice for fear  
And blindness. I have lived to see

How some of us must suffer here  
To make tomorrow's millions free:

Till death's last anæsthetic gray  
Shall slowly drift and dissipate,  
Till unseen surgeons lift away  
All pain, and crooked souls are straight.

*Peconic, 5-15-14*

## *THE OLD*

PARIS lay in the moonlight, Paris asleep and white,  
Till across the court of my hotel I heard a cough  
in the night.

Horrible, hoarse, and choking, like the voice of death  
that lags

When the mind is blind, and the soul is sick, and furled  
its battle flags:

And life is a slow surrender, and the flesh is torn to  
rags.

Life is a slow surrender at last for every one.

They steal the light of day from us, and the splendor  
of the sun.

And each breath that we draw, draws nearer, coughing  
or crooning slow,

The old, old songs that we used to sing in the sunlight  
long ago,

To the darkness, and the silence, and the end that none  
can know.

Life is a slow surrender to the legions of the years:

All that we worked and wept for once, at last the urge  
of tears.

Strength of the hand, and muscles like armies drilled to  
die,

All melodies that fill the ear, all flowers that thrill the  
eye,

Beauty of waves and women, noon; midnight and morning's sky:

Scent of pale violets in the woods, of new mown hay and brine,

All savor of our daily bread, all wonder waked in wine,  
Warmth of our children's kisses, clasping of clinging hands:

All these Thy gifts, we give Thee, Lord, who learn Thy law's commands,

Till sick and old and shivering the soul a beggar stands.

We lay upon Thy altar, Lord, a friend's last loving smile,

A love's last letter, memories of gold that gleam awhile,  
Of all things glad and tender, of all things fair and true.

Life is a slow surrender of all we dream and do:

Till the last pale embers smoulder cold, and the last frail hour wears through.

Life that to this year's living devotes each spring gone by

That gave us all, who giving our lives, at rest shall lie:

Life is a slow surrender of all our outworks. Still



We hold one citadel of thought, whose starving souls  
still thrill  
To triumphs new, new battles fought by thought im-  
mortal wrought of will.

*Peconic, 6-6-14*

## BLIND

**Y**OU look at shadows all your lives, a world of shadows. Once I saw  
The shifting surfaces of things, the masks that men and women wear.  
The rags of beauty long outworn, whose flesh has failed, where greed and care  
Have made all little things of life the sordid letters of its law.

Once all was agony. The light like life itself went day by day.  
Blind panic died. I tried to make a million records, could not choose  
Out of the world that slipped from me, the last to see, the last to loose.  
Till like an abscess lanced, the worst with the last day-light went away.

Since I had lost myself in light and freedom that you waste as well;  
In my black prison cell for life I stumbled, groping maimed and sore.  
I wrecked my soul against the wall. I went on falling through the floor  
Into the void whose heart reveals that heaven is here as near to hell,

As light and shadow. I was lost. I clutched at what  
was nearest. Long  
I clung to kindness, to the hands whose clasp brought  
back my friends to me.  
I felt the love I once forgot, I was too close to, once,  
to see.  
I heard it till I knew at last, each word of welcome was  
a song.

So I began to give myself. Once I had taken, wasted  
all.  
Since I had nothing else to give, I gave my greetings  
snatched from pain,  
And trembling smiles, till people brought their trials to  
me. And once again  
I have a world for working in. Today it claims me when  
I call.

We see the stars at night alone. Its shadows pale illusion  
sends.  
From sunrise to the dusk of day, to veil all vital things.  
At last  
From my close cloister of despair, from one gray, wasted  
world I passed,  
Into another where I see the spirit faces of my friends.

The soul of beauty still is mine; that mothers feel but  
cannot say,  
When first their first-born's lips they press; like sound  
beyond all symphonies.  
And all the awful vast of space is lit with living stars  
like these,  
Till all the pain that mars His face dies as God's shadows  
die today.

*Peconic, 7-14-14*

## *PEOPLE*



## COMMUTERS

THE western window of their world was open wide  
to heaven today,

Till eight o'clock slammed down the shade and trains  
went whirling them away.

The morning papers poisoned dawn, with rape and murder,  
greed and lies.

They saw the city from the ferry; the altars high of  
sacrifice,

Where beauty strives with steel and granite, and men  
of slime make merchandise.

New hopes and fair ambitions there were written round  
their lips in light,

And strangers marched as brothers, where young loves  
touched finger tips at sight.

They saw a road of glory laid across the tide-way for  
an hour.

They vanished in the shadows slowly where cliffs of  
windows blindly tower,

Where greed's slow ambuscades are lurking, and men  
must pay their price for power.

Blithe feet on furtive errands went and gracious fingers  
ruin wrote.

From discontent to discontent they grew. Harsh note  
on harsher note,

The ferry whistles through the fog outroared the clamor  
of the cars.

Young eyes grew sordid and despairing and eager spirits  
chafed their bars,

While men and masters of tomorrow built up their city  
towards the stars.

Day after day and year on year they were besieged until  
they died,

By office shadows, by the streets where life is cursed and  
crucified.

And boyhood's dreams were smeared with mud. One  
gave her youth and ten their tears;

Life seemed to some a barren service. And they were  
starved of prayers and fears,

That women for their children cherish who triumph o'er  
their iron years.

The charge wins home within our walls, and catapult  
and mangonel

On trembling platforms creak and strain, around our  
island citadel.

Like haggard women once in Greece whose bleeding  
fingers wrought amain,

From their own hair the bowstring's plaiting while boys  
snatched arrows from the slain



That dying, fighting men might glory in Athens born in  
light again:

Their millions pale to battle march when daylight ends  
the truce of God.

His splendor through His loopholes see at dawn and  
twilight. Heads that nod

At noon in languor, may not know the charges and the  
counter-calls.

But deathlessness is in their dreaming and strength in  
every tear that falls,

To stay this city's soul, that kneeling from battle builds  
up reeling walls.

*S.S. Shidzuoka Maru, 1-18-14*

## NINE O'CLOCK

YOU housed and hid corruption: in darkness bred  
disease,

You laid upon the children your lusts and infamies.

You starved them and you cheated their lives of all  
delight.

You made the air of heaven a sickness in the night.

You blinded them to beauty, their sunshine stole away,

And still the children come to school to make you young  
today.

And some are dumb to gladness, and some forget to  
smile,

And some are vile and cruel, and some are tame and  
vile.

And half of them are hungry, and faces foul and gray,

Small ghosts of lives no woman loves go with them.

They obey

The old primeval evils, the old primeval pains

That bore them and begat them, that fester in their  
veins.

They are your want and weaknesses, the children of your  
greed,

The price you pay for pleasure. By their sorrow you  
succeed.

Their faces are your failures. In filth and gutter slime

You slip with them and stumble through by-ways black  
of time

Whose fever and infection you harbor in your haste.

And you that cheapen seconds here, tomorrow's æons  
waste.

But out of evil surges an urge to better things,

And in their cries and curses a living spirit sings.

And life that in the lifetime of stars we learn to weigh,  
Has made this school a block house of freedom for to-  
day.

And here the children herding from the terrors in the  
night

Look up and see one loophole that leads at last to light.

Not yet, life's laboratories and armories of will,

Our schools may win our war for us, for life to live  
must kill.

And still in black battalions, the children passing by,

Must struggle through these streets of shame where life  
to live must die.

For this their mothers bore them, our raw recruits who  
are

The armies of the broken road we build from star to  
star.

*Los Angeles, 11-4-13*

## THE WIRETAPPER

OUT of the dark when the streets are still, through  
a city that sleeps, in its hive of stone,  
When night is a smoke, where its swarms are laid;  
Then rises a sound like a hammer of hoofs on the trail  
of the wires, a heart that's afraid,  
Pounding in terror, lost and alone.

And it knocks and it knocks, like a soul that seeks, break-  
ing the locks, and the bounds of space,  
To leap to its own; till all longing dies.  
And quick as the click of a key, somewhere I can see  
despair in a woman's eyes,  
In the letters of death that my fingers trace.

Out of the night where the ether thrills, and the heart  
of hills is a deathless dance,  
Of atoms that pulse to the lift of life,  
There comes an echo of worlds at war, of light and  
darkness locked in strife,  
Sweating the scum of circumstance.

A child is born. And I watch by day, and into a slum  
while a gambler waits;  
I relay word of a horse that wins,  
From a stock exchange, where the greed of a race places  
its bets on a nation's sins.  
I preach the price of your lost estates.

My faith is filtered. No longer alone I knock on the  
wall of a cell in the night.

My laboratory of life is stirred

By the deep sea cables and wires, and the nerves of a  
sense that grows till all sound is heard,

Like the lenses serving our larger sight.

For once at college something I saw, a strange machine  
with its wires and rods

And it measured pressures of mind and will.

And here in the shadows I see the light. I trace life's  
records; when all is still,

Register scales for the works of gods.

*Los Angeles, 11-21-13*

## THE AIRMAN

I WENT soaring through the sunshine, when the  
noon was hot and high.  
I rose in ranging spirals, like a maelstrom made to fly.  
I made my upper level, and I cut my motor free.  
And I catapulted down a mile. Then I began to be  
One free pulse of man's perfection and his larger liberty:

And a thought of life incarnate in a boundless brain of  
blue.  
I rose throbbing through the silences, and clouds I  
clambered through;  
Till the twilight came acreeeping as the tide sets back to  
land,  
From the night that still lay sleeping. I began to under-  
stand  
How men mount to meet tomorrow from the ocean's  
slime and sand.

To the sea cliffs, to the tree tops, to the snow peaks, on  
they came;  
Wave on wave of will and hunger, pulse on pulse of  
force and flame;  
Past the glaciers, past the lava, deserts, forests, faltered  
far.  
They left the night of jungles. They went steering by  
a star,

From those jungles, in the ether where lost suns like  
orchids are.

These grew large when twilight loomed, when I had  
plumbed the curve of time:

Endless spirals round the planets past dead tribes too  
tired to climb,

Endless gyres where eagles's pinions ghostly pathways  
pioneered,

For high hearts that ride the whirlwind. To my soar-  
ing soul appeared

All men made, and all their marching, till a trail to  
heaven they reared.

All processions of peril till our best began to be,  
Born of men that held the hills, and made their highways  
over sea.

I was free in space forever. Then my essence thinned  
and failed;

Then my motor died, and faster flashing through the air  
I sailed;

Fell through wider spirals still, till through earth's  
shadow slow I trailed.

There was rest and food, and human hearts and hands,  
and help and heat.

All our vital stores renewing, till our motor's tireless  
beat  
Dies beyond the daylight's limit, past the outer surf of  
air;  
We shall seek our new worlds out, to harbors new for-  
ever fare,  
Where man mounts to meet tomorrow; masters life for-  
ever there.

*S.S. Scotian, 7-18-11*



## THE SIGNAL TOWER

I SEE the warp and woof of things cross and recross in strands of steel.

I shift my levers one by one, my switches in the moonlight throw.

I hold the keys of life and death. I master them today.  
I know

My schedules as you know your hand. My hands a giant keyboard feel,

And more than music's harmonies the silences to me reveal.

For my piano stretches far between two cities, thirty miles

And more. I strike my chords across the big black sounding-box of night.

I play them up. And rolling true, a mile a minute's blurr of light,

The Limited goes flaming by. A woman at a window smiles,

A forger sees success. A fool the dullness of his life reviles.

A baby wakes. His mother's smile, her tense caress unseen is mine.

A lover sees his sweetheart near. A widow's heart brings home her dead.

I break their motives with a jar. I halt them with a wreck ahead.

I seize their thoughts that wander dazed, and breathless fear with faith combine;

Then in a second's sure crescendo, I send them clanging down the line.

By day I halt them here and there, my iron ritual enforce. I drill their souls undisciplined. I give and take the right of way.

I am tomorrow's ministrant. My crossroad's altar of to-day

They all pay tribute to; obey the hand I hold across their course;

The strongest and the weak as well. Against my will is no resource.

And here in trembling and in fear I deal with life that leaps to me.

For once one second saved a wreck. And every second death that lurks

In fire and fog may break the leash I hold on him and all his works.

And time will take his sacrifice. And greed and speed relentlessly,

Must fling their children to the flames, that so the millions may go free.

I serve the millions. Stronger hands than mine thrust  
back the specters stark.

Blindfold I shuttle destinies. I send them on to ends un-  
known;

Strong soldiers of the centuries and lives that sink in  
shame alone.

I set my semaphores, that men starting from sodden  
slumbers mark,

Who by their living worship life that drives them blindly  
through the dark.

*Los Angeles, 11-15-13*

## THE CONSTRUCTION GANG

THEY caught us in the steerage when they brought  
us over sea;  
They tagged us with their tickets and they crowded us  
in cars;  
They rolled us to a railhead of an empire yet to be,  
One night beneath the stars.

In the blackness of the bunkhouse we were waked before  
the dawn.  
And they gave us pick and crowbar, taught us how to  
heave and strike.  
Where across a dusty desert two thin strands of steel  
were drawn,  
Side by side and just alike.

We went working through the sage brush where an ocean  
once went dry,  
In a country cursed with devils like the heavens over-  
head,  
And they burned to scattered clinkers saw-toothed moun-  
tains round the sky.  
Till the last dim cloud was dead.

To the country of the cactus we came slowly day by  
day.  
Tie by tie we bound the levels, foot by foot we filled the  
grade;

And we strained the sagging cables of a power house far  
away

Up the road our hands had made.

And the sand storms tried to blind us, and the winds  
like devils danced,

Till the air was black at noonday. And the desert's  
maddened soul

Rose to wrestle with our working and to rave. But we  
advanced

Step by step, and grasped our goal.

For our brothers came to meet us from the mountains  
and the sea.

And we spliced the line at Summit; drove the spike that  
marked the end;

And we floated down to Frisco where the barkeep mixes  
free,

Just as long as luck's your friend.

We put money on the tables and our manhood on the  
bars,

We who made tomorrow nearer for the world that waits  
to ride,

Till we straggled back from brothels to the open where  
the stars

See the desert's doors flung wide.

*Los Angeles, 11-7-13*

## THE LINESMAN

CAN'T you see them through the ages, smoking flares  
by lava lit,  
Waxen torches, Tyre and Sidon's galley lamps, that float  
and flit  
Past night's narrowing frontier; temple lanterns, cres-  
sets high  
Greece and Venice and Japan gave the globe to worship  
by,  
Gave the tribes of men that marching like the lights,  
must live and die?

There were beacons on the hills, there were burning spires  
and towers.  
Light went leaping round the world and blossomed forth  
in flaming flowers,  
Till the ages dark were ended. Candles guttered. Oil  
they drew  
From the veins of earth, new gases flickered, flags of  
flame for you,  
Leading science; searching, finding larger lights and  
clearer, too.

Out of air and out of ether, came new tremblings through  
the night.  
Man that takes the pulse of life, has found her fevered,  
sweating light;

Curried her with brazen brushes, spurred her on with  
spikes of fire;  
Furnaces and dynamos he trained and tuned; now to their  
choir  
Rivers harnessed to his service bring new notes of man's  
desire.

So the lights march on. I see them in the jungles, in the  
mirk;  
Lurking shadows flee before them, in the slums where  
men must work,  
In steel caisson-coffins dying; in the mines that keep you  
warm;  
Finding power, that seaborne marches faster still through  
fog and storm.  
Swarms of light, new regiments of life I lead; from mid-  
night form.

Through your mist filled mills I send them, where wet  
cotton lint like snow  
Covers children, coughing, falling, ulcered lives too sick  
to grow.  
There I show you sin and shame. My searchlight fingers  
I display,  
Shifting, feeling past all perils. I make midnight bright  
as day.

Where your cities focus life that festers, I make white its  
way.

Now new stars and constellations through your streets  
and meadows shine.

Past your footlights I lead joy. Laboratory, school and  
shrine,

I have sentineled; your surgeons reinforced. Where  
mothers see

Lives that leap to light from midnight, I have toiled to  
set you free —

I, the midwife of your spirits, bring to light your years to  
be.

*Peconic, 6-27-14*



## THE ACCOUNTANT

HERE is eternity today, God's body broken to your hands.

You let it slip and fall away or mold it to your soul's demands.

All things must pass, the current flows. Your vortex ring of will as well

A zero or one unit shows in man's account of heaven and hell.

Not to be nothing — I am one of millions toiling in the dark

For wages bare from sun to sun, who see far lights of life, and mark

Some muffled thunder of applause when man the master conquers time,

Out of new matter forges laws that force a million souls to climb.

God sends new Prophets in our day. Darwin and Wallace pioneered

For Spencer and the rest the way, till a new heaven and earth appeared.

Crooks, Haeckel, Curie, Edison, Marconi, Metchnikoff, Carrel,

Pasteur and Erlich, all have won for men new issues forth from hell:

Hell that is waste in rotting flesh, in ulcered streets and and souls as well.

God writes new scriptures hour by hour. Of all His  
scribes I am the least.  
I list men's lusts, their greed for power in ledgers black.  
Where soul and beast  
Wrestle and writhe and rise and fall, I chart a nation's  
fever curve.  
I cast its balance. Least of all thy scribes of truth: I  
also serve.

Had I the power of Parkman blind, but regent of his life-  
time, then:  
The awful annals of the mind, this sudden rush of  
thought to men,  
I should set forth in order, show how doubt and dogma  
still go back,  
New searchlights through mean streets would throw,  
through each soul alley, foul and black,  
New antiseptics of the brain announce, in tense detail  
relate  
How Christ has come to earth again, how God is man  
and masters fate.

Today flames forth a new crusade, the last the sternest  
creed of all.  
For man the ape by ages made mounts to the stars,  
though churches fall.

He spreads his wings; his airships soar. New tremblings  
through the ether thrill,  
New messengers of fire adore his more immune, immortal  
will.  
One letter of that Gospel learned, one text of freedom  
to proclaim,  
With loftier faith than e'er discerned the martyr's eye:  
I suffer shame,  
I gave my body to be burned, I send my soul to feed the  
flame.

*S.S.Dunbea, 2-10-14*

## MOVIES

**B**ROADWAY'S one big moving picture. Where I  
sit I see it plain,  
Typing letters by my window while they come and go  
again,  
People passing, millions, always, until midnight shifts the  
reels.  
There are days I see it, hear it, seem to know just how it  
feels.

There are days life seems so near that I could touch it in  
the street,  
Kiss them all, both men and women, bring their wasted  
lives to meet.  
There are days they glide like shadows through the mist  
with muffled tread,  
And my soul goes out to seize them through the air that  
drags like lead.

They go silently like shadows through the shadow cold  
and gray,  
Color stolen from their faces, thought and purpose drained  
away  
Faster still to feed the lights that flame forever for suc-  
cess.  
Moving shadow-shapes of pain and toil that fails in loneli-  
ness.

Shadow pictures, bloodless, lifeless. Yet we watch them  
though we know

Life is on the hills, the ocean, in green woods where all  
things grow.

Shadow shapes as gray and grimy as the parts of time's  
machine,

Grinding life across the city with gray daylight for a  
screen.

Over there is life, but here our life persists and tone-  
lessly

Struggles on between the seats where millions more like  
me may see.

Millions more like me, all marching toward tomorrow  
past today.

We can see the frauds, the failures, see weak faces on their  
way.

Cold and gray they move forever. They are marching past  
despair,

Past defeat, to better things, to larger light, to clearer  
air.

On the altar of tomorrow casting all, till time reveals  
All we doubted, feared, despairing of the ending of the  
reels.

We have made the pictures move and mirror life that wins  
at last,  
Records new to stir tomorrow, purpose new that brings the  
past  
Back to make the people live, the blind to see, my brain to  
know  
How my fingers hammering each key have helped today  
to grow.

*New York, 6-22-14*

## THE PIT

I WENT sinking from the sunlight and the faces of  
my friends,  
Till at last they never knew me. I went sinking deeper  
yet;  
Drinking death by inches warm, and wet, and fighting to  
forget;  
Killing longing, killing thinking, into night that never  
ends.

One warm wave reached up and splashed me, smeared my  
footing where I stood,  
Where the city's cliffs and ledges built frail bridges o'er  
the pit;  
Sieve on sieve that lets you through or lets you cling.  
Last night I could  
Scent salvation in the spring, and feel that I still was heir  
to it.

One warm wave reached up and swept me where God  
lets His gutters reek,  
Where lost women sob at midnight, shriek and shudder;  
till I stood  
Where the pressure of the millions crushes down the sick  
and weak,  
Every will life wastes still, slowly to the slime's last  
brotherhood.

I ate garbage in the gutters. I lay noisome in the sun.  
Scrubbed spittoons for drink to drug me, stole from children and the blind,  
Wrote love letters for a harlot, shared her wages: one by one  
Learned each secret shame that festers in the flesh of humankind.

Something saved me: for the pit has tides that rise and fall and rise.  
I woke up one morning early, heard the trolleys clank and jar,  
Through their sound a woman sang a song I knew. I raised my eyes,  
From a pier head saw the sunrise: knew each cinder hides a star.

On the street I found a friend. I turned from him, then took his hand,  
Took his clothes, his food, his faith; let him find me work to do;  
Found that I had not forgotten how to love. I understand  
Why the pit for man's salvation must persist the ages through.



There man tries the strength of love. God Almighty's  
mercy knows.

We can never love the happy in our happiness as well  
As the soul that still must suffer, lavishing all life it  
owes

On the human hands and hearts whose loving lifts the lost  
from hell.

*Peconic, 7-30-14*



## *MOODS*



## KINSHIP AT DAVOS

I RODE through the rain on my way that day;  
    (Thirty miles pedalled through drizzle and mud)  
Till I took the train. And I thirsted for blood.  
And I couldn't hear all that the mountains say —  
"If you can't be as big and as high as we are  
Be as big as you can." And I looked from the car  
At the flanks of the hills like two walls that were green  
And the torrents that tore the gray boulders between.  
And they sang as they flowed, "We must fall who were  
    free,  
There are rocks in our road. But we run to the sea."

And the steam of the train as it writhed and it hissed  
Like a snake as it mounted, was lost in the mist;  
Till only the pine tops stood clear of the gray  
Like souls that have sunk to their shoulders in clay.  
Then over the summit we slithered at last,  
With the wheels rolling faster. The mists breaking fast  
Watched a world that to wonder and terror awoke,  
And into decision's gray valley we broke.

Then I came to a kurhaus and cursed at the rain,  
Till I looked at the souls that lay languid in pain.  
And one of them rose looking ruddy and strong.  
Now he hails me in English — Tonight we belong  
To the kinship of blood and of brains and of heart,  
That can make of life's moments an altar and art.

He was human that Hollander. Things that he told  
They shall glow in my mind when the world has grown  
old.

And he laughed at my stories with death in his face.  
There were books we both loved. Oh! the grayest dis-  
grace

Is to go through one's life like a stock or a stone,  
And to suffer, and stumble, and struggle alone.

*Davos, 7-30-12*

## *A REST*

**L**AST night I dreamed of you. I had not seen you  
Or heard from you for weeks. I tried to pass  
What once was wonder's door. You came and called  
me.

There was Ruth's message, better said than written.  
And so I stood; found in your fire once more the last of  
earth's enigmas.

You had a concert later, yet you let me stay.  
Tomorrow was Aida. I might take you.  
So for an hour we sat where I could see you  
Between the twilight and the boulevard,  
That blazed below with lights like golden days  
In life's long darkness, with thin pools of rain  
Like stormy memories that mirrored — nothing much.

Little you said. Your words were like the notes  
Of chords that silence long alone completes.  
And I said less. Yet for a space our spirits hand in hand  
Wondered at all the hours we men and women waste  
In noise and restlessness. I seemed to hear  
The tuning up of life's last orchestra.  
We for a moment struck the pitch together there.

I know that stronger, surer hands than ours  
Must set the score and hold the leader's baton;

That never once again in unison we might sound strings  
that snap,  
Life and the tempered tolerance of time,  
That life interprets to its worshipers.

You were too tense too often. But last night  
You rested as your hands rest on a note  
Stretched like a golden wire that binds our hearts  
To the hereafter and the past together. Nothing more  
I wanted then: until I woke to face  
This world that out of heartbreak wins today.

*Los Angeles, 11-23-13*



## FLOOD TIDE

WHEN things are running crossways till each nerve  
cries out in pain,  
When a thousand clanging hammers of the street beat in  
my brain,  
There comes a day when I drift away to an island of re-  
pose,  
And I lie in my swaying hammock where the gray tide  
water flows.

I lie in my hammock on the porch till the grayness turns  
to blue  
And the morning lifts the mist that shifts to make day  
fit for you,  
And the tide comes creeping landward as the sun comes  
climbing high,  
And the little winds of the morning go rippling through  
the sky.

And the little waves on the beaches thrill where the  
grasses nod and dip.  
And earth and sea are lovers, and lip comes home to lip.  
And your voice is softly singing through long lessons of  
delight,  
And the birds are winging round the flame unseen, serene  
and white;

High on your hearth's bare altar, in the shadows where I  
see  
A form that flits by a window where life smiles back at  
me.  
Then I know why the Lord of our breathlessness, our  
haste, our waste and fret,  
Can lift us up on His tides of light for a season, to forget;

The sunken reefs of our cities, and the wrecks that drift  
and sink,  
Flotsam of fears and prayers and tears and torments; and  
I think  
That we live in a tideless ocean, till a tide that rises high  
Shall lift us up past moon and stars' white tide marks in  
the sky,  
Till the last lost shipwrecked life on earth has grown too  
great to die.

*Riverhead, 7-9-14*

## PLEIN AIR

**I** SIT in the open country beneath my apple trees,  
And the winds walk up to talk with me. There all  
the sky one sees,  
And my heart's for the far horizons and the little creeping  
things;  
A bird in the grass, and a flower in the field. A grub un-  
folds its wings,  
And my fancy flits and soars with him and sings where  
rivers run,  
Out in the open country I go swimming in the sun.

And a motor hoots down the highway, and my thoughts  
go travelling back  
To the city's crowded prison cells where life lies on the  
rack;  
To the streets that they smear with shadows till the  
strongest slip and fall.  
Out in the open country there is life and light for all.  
And the sky is a high cathedral where all the nights and  
days  
They kindle lights of worship; and life is prayer and  
praise.

A ploughman rounds his furrows in rituals as old  
As the incense he sets free for me. A painter gets his  
gold  
From buttercups in the meadow and sunlight on the brook.

A bee goes stealing honey where I begin my book.  
And nine little yellow goslings go down the sea to seek,  
And the life that lives in the marshes. A boat beats up  
the creek.

A baby beats on a window. And I think of the souls that  
crawl  
Past counters heaped with human hearts, from office wall  
to wall,  
Where the tickers time the tiring hearts of greed and a  
gray desire.  
Out in the open country today is a golden fire.  
And the sun mounts up to midday till all the air is light.  
And the clouds are the breath of God Himself who gives  
us day and night.

He is here in the air around us. And His words are the  
winds of May.  
He is there in the hearts that hold Him fast and take  
Him home today,  
Where babes are burned to Moloch, and offered blindly  
there  
To the greed and grime of millions, in the horror and  
despair,  
Where a baby beats at a window, two pennies clutching  
tight,  
Till life, the mother, takes today and lifts it up to light.

*Peconic, 5-28-14*

## *SATURDAY'S TRAIN*

**S**ATURDAY'S train is always late. We stand on a  
platform of splintered planks,  
Until New York for a marvelous minute into our cosmos  
slides and clanks.

The mail bag falls, trunks hit the floor, and people in  
turn on the steps appear;  
Portraits framed in a vestibule door, with their faces smil-  
ing and flushed and dear.

And the girls on the platform chatter and kiss and hug as  
they hang on each other's necks,  
And we hustle them off to our motors and rigs, and we  
grab their bags and their coats and checks.  
And the motors and rigs are standing in ranks around the  
door of a corner store,  
And one of us waits outside for the mail where the farm-  
ers tramp like the train on the floor.

And we get our letters and look at the news, and we pay  
for peaches and cigarettes,  
Oars and raisins, and tennis shoes, and talcum powder and  
landing nets,  
And we gossip and race to the cross roads. Then, one  
after another we glide away  
Down our own little lane in the heart of the woods that  
leads to light by the side of the bay.

In mid-Manhattan in mid-July from my office window I  
gaze afar  
Past the haze of heat and the smoking roofs to the shallows  
cool where our beaches are.  
And I see the faces of people that paint, people that write,  
and the rest that wait  
On a splintered platform, week after week, for a Saturday  
train that is sure to be late.

Henry and Edith, Helen and Charles, and a score besides  
through the heat rays swim:  
And the children, Isabelle, Betty and Jack, Richard and  
Caroline, Babs and Bim.  
And I want to get back to the paths they tread, to the  
flowers they find, to the wind in the trees,  
And the sailing dories and motor boats, and the sound and  
the sweep and the color of seas.

There's a weed in a crack in the bathhouse floor. There's  
a window low where I watch the moon.  
There's a curve in the creek where the fireflies flash.  
There are stars in the trees, I shall see them soon.  
And the old gray station's an altar of life, and its pilgrim  
armies each Sabbath ascend  
To the worship of winds in the open air, and the shrines  
in your soul where you find your friend.

There's maybe a heaven hereafter, yes. But I guess that  
it never can be complete  
Without that station two rods or less from the end of the  
shadowy settlement street;  
Without the faces you're sweating to find at the end of a  
lifetime's working day,  
When your soul from its stupor, dumb and blind, leaps up  
like a boy's to its last long play.  
Heaven hereafter? Never you mind. Here's heaven  
enough for one week on the way.

*Peconic, 7-27-14*

## WELCOME

THERE is a hillside garden that their tender hands  
have tended,  
Below a house that holds for me a shrine of joy and  
light.  
And there beneath a cloudless sun when June is warm  
and splendid  
I see them coming home to me, three girls in garments  
white.

Alice with lilies in her hands, and little dark Dolores  
Showing her glowing marigolds; and Iris last of all  
Under the arbor by the wall of purple morning glories;  
Bringing my crimson ramblers back that sought to scale  
the wall.

Alice with smiles along her lips; Dolores still and tender;  
Iris whose eyes can tell me more than tongue shall ever  
say;

They offer to my open arms their bodies soft and slender,  
Bringing the best of summer here, their garlanded today.

Into my study they have swept and brasses from Benares,  
Vases from Venice they have filled, and hung their wreaths  
around

The portrait where their mother smiles like the tall tran-  
quil Maries

That Perugino used to paint, with hair like sunlight  
crowned.



"Mother is coming home today." (The words themselves are singing.)

"How long it is," our litany, forgotten, they repeat,  
Making their last response to love, their last oblation  
bringing,

Till at the hour of evensong, their voices still more sweet,  
Tremble and sanctify the house where happy hearts shall  
meet.

*Yokohama, 12-23-13*

## CHILDREN

YOU cannot see the children, you have hidden them  
away.

In the shadows, in the streets of shame, of souls too tired  
to play,

Of lives too sad to smile at light, that never see the sun;  
Toiling on to meet the midnight till the day's long task  
is done;

Toiling, choking in your sweatshops. These you murdered  
one by one.

You cannot hear the children. In the noises of your  
streets

You have drowned each sigh of pleasure, dulled each  
heart that leaps, that beats,

Like hillside brooks your greed makes sluggish, stagnant.

You have choked their cries,

Cries of rapture, slowly ceasing, till tonight's last lullabies

Through your riot sound like dirges, where love watches  
love that dies.

You cannot feel the children. Kisses sweet as birds at  
dawn,

Fail where wailing, faint and fretful, souls that smiled  
have starved and gone.

All their little least caresses, you have thwarted, thrust  
aside;

Every drowsy head that presses closer home at even tide;  
Every kiss that lingers, blesses, you have lost in greed and  
pride.

You cannot love the children that you lose and leave  
alone;  
Lives unborn and warped and wasted, while your hearts  
are turned to stone,  
In your mills by millions murdered. Like the flowers you  
starved and smeared  
In lost gardens of your cities; till a shadow black ap-  
peared  
Of their anguish, dumb and dreadful, near success by  
slaves revered.

You cannot save the children till you learn yourself to  
save,  
And the burden of their ruin you must carry to the  
grave;  
Growing cruel, tame and tearless, flesh and spirit frail as  
well;  
Butchered by machines by millions, you have left them  
there in hell;  
Till their ruin's black infection taints the thing you buy  
and sell.

But you cannot check the children. Life is stronger than  
your sins,  
Than your bitterness and blindness; and a fairer day be-  
gins.  
They are stirring, they are waking. Out of mill and  
mine and slum,  
Like sap in spring, like light at dawn, like life at birth they  
come;  
And their cry becomes a gospel, life's last word on lips  
long dumb.

*Peconic, 6-11-14*

## *BED RIDDEN*

**I** WAS a child. I lay in bed.  
They put a bandage round my head  
And doctors came and looked at me.  
I was as sick as I could be,  
And I could hardly smile or see.

But sometimes that the sky was blue  
I knew. When most I longed for you  
I heard you singing soft and low  
The songs that mothers always know,  
And then the pain would seem to go.

And sometimes when I waked at night,  
When all was dark, a single light  
Would show you sitting by my side  
And "Mother, Mother dear!" I cried,  
And you were near until you died.

I was a child. I lay abed.  
God put His pressure on my head.  
He sent His pain to question me  
When all the world was mine to see  
And I was sad as I could be.

I was alone. I longed for you.  
And sometimes when the sky is blue  
I seem to see you, seem to know

Your voice forever sweet and low,  
And dream that you can never go.

And sometimes when the stars at night  
Sprinkle that river black with light  
Like stepping stones that cross the sky ;  
I go to meet you, dear. And I  
Know you are near, until I die.

*Peconic, 6-5-14*

## PLAY RITUAL

UNDER the trees of the orchard's gray columns and  
    cloisters, upholding  
Courts of the temple of living, the world has forgotten  
    today.  
Bulwarked by bastions of green the true treasures of ages  
    unfolding,  
Safe in the shade of a hedge, her children I hear at their  
    play;  
And I sit by my window and watch and I listen, a life-  
    time away.

Here is a carbon of Pallas. And yonder, Ulysses, her  
    chosen  
Creeps through his palace at night with Argos the hound  
    at his heels,  
With him Eumaeus, the swineherd, the son of my cook.  
    Fear has frozen  
The suitors, Penelope's dolls. The bow twangs. The  
    last of them reels.  
And the queen at the sight of the slain a rage unrecorded  
    reveals.

She is pacified fully with gifts. Brother's coat is a carpet  
    that flying  
Has haled them in haste to the East where Golconda is  
    grown on the trees.

And topaz and rubies they rain on her lap. Every skeptic  
belying  
The story of Eden they act, in costume convention de-  
crees  
With a snake that I gave them last May, made of rubber  
that squirms when you squeeze.

They are Argonauts bound for the ports where Medea  
mandagora mixes  
In a smudge that mosquitoes abhor (I can smell the stray  
fumes of it here).  
And Aladdin, before they are lost, and the Jinn of the  
bottle. She fixes  
Her hair with the comb of the Lorelei. They are every-  
thing living and dear  
That the poets and children of time must remember  
while year follows year.

And her soul is the soul of the wind that my baby's  
bright tresses caresses,  
And she kisses the lips of her son as they stiffen and  
sternly command.  
And her life is the life of the earth that inch of their  
loveliness presses  
As they throw themselves down in the shadows too tired  
and too sleepy to stand.



And she calls, and they smile and they see her, in dreams  
of the heart's shadowland.

There the spirits of mothers that played with their babies  
forever are tender.

And the little flushed cheeks in the summer they cool.

And they smile with the spring.

But saddest and sweetest of all they call through the  
autumn's wild splendor

When our gifts to her altar of light with the months  
and the minutes we bring;

All that playtime and sorrow have sealed to the service  
of life that is king.

*S.S. Awa Maru 11-28-13*

## *MACHINE MADE*

**W**IRES and rails and paving stones, bricks and mortar, plaster, glass:

We have made a world of them. We have done with trees and grass,

Flowers and sunrise and delight, seas and stars and mountain tops.

We wind on from day to night, through this treadmill till one drops.

We walk other people's ways, trodden hard and hard to tread.

We live other people's days, crowded, airless, chill and dead.

We hear other people's noise, numbing nerves and heart and mind;

Envy other people's joys, unexpected, unresigned:

Stare at other people's clothes, furs and feathers, silk and lace;

See what other people see, in each blank, machine-made face,

Painted, powdered, newly gilt, tailor's dummies for the rest:

Watching other's roses wilt, by their passion mad possessed:

Once a month, or once a year, in some supper room at  
night,

Wasting other people's cheer, stealing other people's light.

Turning life to foaming wine and empty bottles. We  
awake.

Reading other people's lies, up to town our task we  
take.

All the old machine-made things we who nothing new  
devise

Do. The soul in us that sings, sighs and sickens, droops  
and dies.

Other people's lusts we live, printed, bound, at second  
hand.

Other people's sins forgive, who their slaves of habit  
stand.

Murders, treasons, tyrannies, maimings, blindings, brand-  
ing, all;

In our cheap machine-made ease; all things petty, tame  
and small

Manufactured for today, by the million; we retail,

Advertise and toss away in a world for rent or sale.

Other people's souls we sell, buy or barter for our own.

Other people's heaven or hell, doubt or dig. All life  
alone,

Out of other people's sight, like our youth long since  
gone by:

Other people's day and night we are drugged with till  
we die.

*New York, 7-17-14*

## *THINGS*



## *THE EARTH MAN*

AFTER A STATUE BY LOUIS POTTER

**W**ISTFUL, blind, brooding, silent, he stands;  
All the long strength of earth creeping to  
light,  
Holding its substance in huge, heavy hands,  
Groping a path to the portals of sight.

Earth that is slow in him fetters his feet.  
Rooted in soil like the life of the trees,  
Brother of mountains, inert, incomplete,  
Fitted to struggle and grow by degrees;

He is the past that to rise is compelled,  
Pressure of glaciers and lava's slow flow;  
Brain of the brute from black caverns expelled  
Into the open, its Maker to know.

He is five fingers that stretch till they touch.  
He is a horror that shudders and hides.  
He is a need that must grapple and clutch,  
Vital and sure as the turn of the tides.

Sounds beat like hammers, and batter his ears;  
Surf in its rages, and rivers that run,  
Roaring of beasts; till above them he hears  
The song of a bird like the soul of the sun:

Something that urges him up and afar,  
Summons his spirit to lust and to hate,  
Lunge through the shadows to capture a star,  
Hunt till he holds her, his woman and mate.

He is alone though his heart knows it not,  
Bound by blind hunger of belly and nerves;  
Child of the ages that blackness begot;  
He is Tomorrow whose Master he serves.

*New York, 1-26-12*



## AURORA

AFTER A STATUE BY LOUIS POTTER

SHE is the sunrise of the waking earth,  
Naked and perfect as a perfect flower,  
Fearless and poised to meet the light's embrace.  
For in her eyes a soul has come to birth  
Fresh from its sleep and fragrant, every hour  
Of love's delights fore-shadowed in her face.

She is the essence of all loveliness,  
Of every spring time. Every flower and fruit  
That grew before her gladly to the light  
Made her immortal. Terror and distress  
Toiled in the blackness to transmute the brute,  
To make her beauty wonderful and white.

She is the moon's last beam, the gleam of dew  
That mirrors dawn while shadows shroud the grass,  
The rose of fire that reddens winter's rime;  
Radiance of sunsets and of rainbows too,  
Of all things perfect that appear and pass,  
Transient and deathless till the end of time.

In her all river currents harmonize  
With rippling pools that eddy round her breasts,  
And winds that whisper trembling through her hair.  
And the long lines from shoulders through to thighs

Break as the waves break. Into curving crests  
Around her rise caressing tides of air.

She is a symphony, the sum of joy  
Shaped in one body for the world to see,  
To learn from her forever to rejoice.  
She is the smile no sorrow can destroy  
Warm on the lips of all humanity  
Waiting to hear the wonder of her voice.

*New York, 1-29-12*

## *THE GOLDEN GIRL*

AFTER A STATUE BY RUDOLPH EVANS

**F**IVE thousand years of sculpture fashioned her;  
Consummate, simple, modern and as old  
As Myron's bronzes. All her flesh is gold,  
She seems to hear her sisters' footsteps stir.

Shy dryads gaze at her from old gray trees;  
Truth in one girl, eternal as today;  
One man's pure passion that transfused her clay,  
Turned her to bronze to stand through centuries.

She bathes in living sunlight all day long.  
She feels the wonder of the world. She knows  
The mysteries of sunsets and of snows.  
She hears the rapture of the river's song.

Around her linger long all tender things;  
'The clouds' slow shadows falling at her feet,  
'The level rays of dawn, the summons sweet  
Of every winged soul that soars and sings.

She listens still until her pilgrims come.  
Children shall smile to see her loveliness;  
And mothers meeting her that hour shall bless.  
Poets shall praise her out of lips long dumb.

For she is beauty, born today to be  
The human sister of the stars and snows,  
The soul of love that smoulders in the rose;  
That one man felt, and gave to all to see.

*Paris, 4-1-14*

## THE GARGOYLES

THEY made a house for holiness, they raised a  
spire for prayer,  
With beasts of the Apocalypse around it in the air.  
The beasts of the Evangelist, man, eagle, lion and ox,  
They carved upon their pinnacles as nature carved her  
rocks  
With fire and frost. And heat and cold, their substance  
slowly wear.

The rains are raised to ravage them. The fingers of the  
storm  
Have felt their flesh and found it firm. When all the  
world is warm,  
When summer swelters, Paris pants, the Seine is small  
and old;  
The fiends rip thunder from the air, and sudden shafts  
of cold.  
Like wasps that stab the firmament, the yellow lightnings  
swarm.

The floods are loosed, the thunder rolls, the gutters choke  
below;  
Above, about the pinnacles, the gusts begin to blow.  
The arrows of the storm have reached the steep cathedral  
roof.  
The devils dance. They tread the tiles. They put them  
to the proof,

Till the tall columns of the nave shall tremble where  
they go.

And then the gargoyles gurgle loud, through throats that  
long were dry.

Through the hot Tophet of the time that flamed to full  
July.

They saw the sun that filled the sky, that flared high  
overhead,

Below they saw the asphalt ooze. They smelt the fumes  
of lead.

The wind became a blowpipe flame that blustered through  
the sky.

The fiends that perched laid hold on them. And now  
the dryness drains

The water from the living rock, slow drops from granite  
veins,

Till in a thousand thunder claps the airs of heaven ex-  
plode;

Till the gargoyles glut with gladness like the gutters in  
the road,

And they swim with life that, laughing, takes its pleasure  
for its pains.

The beasts of the Apocalypse, both blessed and accursed,  
Range round the spire of Notre Dame. The winged  
man stands first.

The eagle, ox and lion there processionalists begin;  
The pelican for charity, the basilisk for sin.  
But oldest and most grim of all, the gargoyles gray are  
thirst.

*Paris, 5-1-13*

## THE STONE PILE

WE had once seen it on a road to France;  
Man barely more than cave man hammering;  
Breaking his stones to fit his iron ring:  
Deaf to all sounds, to all the winds that sing;  
Beating the time for manhood's slow advance:

Making his stone pile. Vermin breeding there  
Festered and rotted, dying in the dark.  
He never knew them, striking spark on spark,  
Lost seeds of light. He never paused to hark  
To man's new motors drumming through the air.

But once a woman singing went her way,  
Singing of loves and lullabies to be.  
He heard her carelessly. He seemed to see  
Things that belonged to lives more large and free.  
And then his smile was like the last of day.

We have made stone piles in our prison walls.  
We have made stone piles in our city streets  
Where life that breeds and festers, life defeats,  
Where the dull heart of labor blindly beats,  
Deaf to the winds and all the world that calls:

Piling our cities; to an iron ring.  
Fitting the stuff that binds our road today  
Lost to the open, vistas far away,



Valiant adventures, prayers that lovers say,  
Seeing one woman singing in the spring:

Piling our cities; manhood far and near  
Shaping the stones that larger lives shall tread  
Beside the road where men that march ahead  
Call us in vain, who die among the dead  
Till life, our love at last stands singing here.

*New York, 6-24-14*

## *FLEET MANŒUVRES*

**T**HEY keep their intervals as true as seasoned  
athletes of a team,  
Trained to the minute. Lean and grim and gray they  
glide in line ahead.  
A white wave welters at each bow. And all is stirless  
overhead  
Save trails of smoke that from three tall gray funnels fall  
and landward stream.

Like runners breathing tensely through October's stirring  
air they go.  
They are as vital and alive; and like the winds they seem  
to wake,  
As packed with power that must explode; as imminent as  
waves that break.  
And shadows long float on before their long and strong  
and level row.

Essential, cosmic, wonderful, in strange new beauty fit  
to serve  
An iron purpose slowly spelled, a living sentence of the  
law,  
That wakes the lightnings and the stars; and sterner  
tensions slowly draw  
Through the vast void of sound and sense, and tighten  
every tingling nerve.

Man's old dominion over fire, his truceless conquest of the  
cold,  
His mastery of storms and tides, his perils long in chart-  
less seas;  
His midnight battles with the brute, his wars of all the  
centuries,  
Their shifting turrets still conceal, their lips of steel in  
silence hold.

All speaks in thunder when at last the flagship's salvos  
shake the air.  
Precise and searching, shot on shot, the target strikes.  
Her soul set free  
Like heroes' hearts in battle born, by smoke wreaths haloed  
splendidly  
Drifts down the line as ship on ship to God begins its  
iron prayer.

Ship after ship makes offering of discipline and fitness  
trained  
To peril's service; ship on ship thunders the law that all  
obey  
In war and peace, whose God is strength and larger  
wisdom day by day.  
Ship after ship in silence goes to goals that yesterday  
ordained.

Twelve steel cathedrals of today, sail trailing incense  
    silently  
Into the west's horizon red, to sentinel a nation's sleep;  
Twelve monasteries stern of men that vigils through the  
    midnight keep;  
For God, whose cities shame the land, still saves His  
    servants on the sea.

*Peconic, 7-12-14*

## GLOUCESTER SCHOONERS

THEY come shining through the morning like a  
troop of laughing girls.

Under each soaring forefoot the flashing water curls.

They have slipped before the sunrise from the shadow-  
lands of night,

And the east is red behind them, and their sails are rose  
and white.

They come from the Banks and the breakers and the  
meshes blind of mist,

Where mermaids in the midnight the sailor's lips have  
kissed

Asleep in his drifting dory. And white hands drag him  
down,

With snows that smooth the surges, and the dreams of  
men they drown.

They come with a toll and a tribute that men from ocean  
take

With the roll of wrecks in winter, and women's hearts  
that break

When they wake in the wild northeasters, and hear on  
their Gloucester shore

The roar of the surf that beaches the bergs on Labrador.

They come from the wild sea witches who mortal women  
hate,

Who troll the shores for their fishing with the sea bass  
for their bait.

Out of the deep to the shallows, where stirless water  
hides

Rocks that are hooks for their hunger, and the torments  
white of tides.

They come with the blood of the Vikings, boys that have  
grown through gales,

Where death on the crest of the breakers poises his weighted  
scales,

Men who have wrought with the east wind, as a fish is  
hooked and played,

And danced at the dawn with danger and wooed her like  
a maid.

They come on the wings of the morning like a flock of  
homing birds,

And hearts go out to meet them, and prayers and whispered  
words.

They come like a choir. And their singing and the twang-  
ing of their stays,

Is a lied of the Lord of landfalls, and of storms, and  
nights and days.

*Los Angeles, 11-12-13*

## THE ROAD

GOD who made the mountains and a wall to call us  
up to Him, made the passes over them and  
choked their gates with snow,

Made His storm winds winnow forth the strong and sure  
of heart of us, made the cold of starless skies to  
sift the weak below.

Then He sent His rivers forth to pioneer a breach for  
us. Then He made the trees that should give men  
fire and heat.

Larches, firs and pines, marching up to meet the avalanche,  
to wrestle with the storm winds, and with winter's  
white defeat:

In their shade by millions made His blossoms, small and  
sweet.

Climbing through the passes come the creatures that pass  
over them, mountain goats and mountain sheep and  
mountain cattle lean.

Mountain lions, gray ghosts of hunger, stalking stealthily.  
So they trod their trails all the vales of earth  
between,

So they crossed the glaciers to the summons of the years  
to be, apes that shedding hair their life's restless  
road surveyed,

Running east and west, from the northern to the southern  
sea, following the air lanes that the birds of passage  
made,

Chased by gulls from rookeries and crags by breakers  
sprayed.

All the ships that sail the sea were launched to serve this  
road of ours. Rome was built to build it and to  
pave its ruts with stone.

All the tribes that triumphed bore their spoils to swell  
this load of ours. All the slaves of failure fell  
and died in dust alone.

Dust and rain were turned to mud, that stopped the cracks  
and chinks of it; so the road was wrested from the  
wastage of defeat.

Dust that red with running blood that renews the earth  
that drinks of it. And the tribes began to battle  
on, once more the light to meet,

Toward the morning, toward the summit, toward the  
snow peaks; from the street.

Carthage, Tyre and Sidon gave their gold to gain its  
maintainance; Greece made fair its reaches with  
her shrines beside the way,

White between the olives, till the cross was planted over  
it, standing at each cross road of the soul that  
strives with clay.

Saracens, Crusaders came and struggled up each mile of  
it. War wins here its summit, there despair to  
ruin rolls.



Conquerors of centuries grew weary for a while of it.

Hannibal, Napoleon, and Cæsar paid their tolls,  
To this road that takes our time, and paves success with  
souls.

Now at last an iron road goes over and goes under it.

Men have tunnelled winter and the mountain's  
heart of stone.

Nature stands half tamed today. Men learn to stab and  
sunder it. But the road still scales the summits  
where the strongest stand alone.

Motor cars and dynamite may make their passing mock  
of it. The weak may seek their tunnels. But the  
mountains and the cold

Lure men from the mob to learn the languor and the  
shock of it, to wrestle with the storm winds as our  
fathers fought of old,

Till they tramp to the tall portals of the sunset's house  
of gold.

Here we glimpse Valhalla, and the splendor and the sheen  
of it. And the zig-zags grow more steep. At last  
they leap from cloud to cloud.

Here we hear Valkyries in the twilight. And the lean  
of it is our tent wall till tomorrow when the winds  
at dusk are bowed.

Worshipping the stars above, our zig-zags to eternity, and  
men that out of ocean and its slime, inert and  
dumb,

Out of night and ether blind, climbing, come their road to  
find. The dying lift the living, with their lips  
and fingers numb.

Till death is but one milestone dark to wider worlds to  
come.

*Paris, 7-3-13*

## THE OVERLAND TRAIL

**I**T began in blood of Vikings, far beyond the Alleghenies. North and south along the shore line from the surges of the sea,

Through the forests, past the mountains, rose the impulse of a nation. From the farms and from the cities strode its sons whose sires were free,

Down the rivers running westward, poled their rafts beyond the rapids. Out beyond the Mississippi prairie schooners setting sail,

Seen like ships along the sky line, met the prairie fires and vanished in the floods of flame, that roaring, swept like rivers past the trail.

But the tide of man was stronger. On they swept and passed the prairies, till their starving cattle, falling where the vultures fed, lay dead.

Circling round them like the whirlwind, the Cheyennes and Comanches in red spirals of despair, rode on behind them and ahead.

Day and night across the prairies, stakes of flame where men and women writhed in torment were their milestones. O'er the ashes of lost lives

They went on. And thirst and hunger rode beside them. Fear and fever were their children in the wagons where the smallpox slew their wives.

They went on and found the foothills. Where the warders of the mountains raised their mile high wall before them, through the pass their column poured. And they rested by the wayside, where white torrents from the snow-fields foamed through shadows of the hill-sides, in green valleys, blossom floored.

Here they halted for a heartbeat of the blood that bore them onward; got their breath, their gear refitted; grappled with the great divide,

Where the storm winds and the lightnings lashed them back on crumbling ledges, where sheer cliffs that fell forever, walled them in on either side.

They went on, and in the desert, death lay waiting, darkly shrouded in the sand storm. And he slew them by his poisoned water holes;

Lured them on with lost mirages. Stripped and maddened they lay dying where he branded them and seared them with the flame that flays men's souls:

But the strongest struggled onward, over fields of rotting lava. Giant cacti rose before them like gray tentacles of death.

They went on and slipped between them, woke once more and saw the mountains; where the trail led to the summit, gazed once more and gathered breath.

They were strong but time was stronger, and he wore them down by inches until winter filled the passes with his wild white ambuscades.

Where the blizzard crested mountains, like a seething sea that freezing skyward whirls its spray, were reeling; in the welter, up the grades

They went on on feet that freezing bled; and breathlessly and falling, dying, with their broken bodies blazed the trail till others came.

And their bones, as white as winter, bare and bleaching in the sunshine, lined the passes, when the summer swept the mountains like a flame.

They marched on, beyond the mountains, coastward striding o'er the ranges, till their leaders, in the sunlight, looking westward saw the sea:

Till the blood that bore them forward, throbbing onward to the ocean, to the heartbeat of the breakers, labored on, from labor free:

Till their strongest on the shore-line felt the trail that they had finished stretching from the far Atlantic with its chain of deathless days,

Like a chain of living wampum, red with bloodshed, black with horror, gray with sorrow; in the struggles of their sons should live always.

This they wrought before the railroad, ere the wires were  
strung that whisper in the darkness through the  
desert: ere our trail of steel we laid.

Like the heartstring of a nation, strong and deathless and  
enduring, something mightier than millions, in  
their day our fathers made.

In this last great folk migration, westward still the millions  
striving follow where the old frontiersmen lit  
their fires and dreamed their dreams.

And their spirits, past the prairies, marching on beyond the  
mountains, trace a trail that runs forever, while one  
lamp of freedom gleams.

*Los Angeles, 10-17-13*

## THE OLD HOUSE

EARTH that loves you, all of you gave her bones to  
make me strong.

Sweating, dust-white quarry men toiled through summer  
sunlight long.

Masons made and rooted me to my hillside. Winter  
nights

Storming legions loosed in vain. Spring brought April's  
shy delights.

Lilacs blossomed in my shade. Autumn stored my cup-  
boards. So

I your fort of life was made; I your school where love  
should grow.

Birds have nested in my trees, summer trysting from the  
South,

Till your fathers learned of life how to love, till heart  
and mouth

Sang their silent ecstasies. Girls their garlands round my  
walls

Round ancestral portraits hung, wreathed my mirrors;  
heard my calls.

All your vigils lone I know. All your hopes and agonies,  
Every prayer and travail pang. I am heir to all of these.

I have borne your children all, echoed laughter light, and  
tears.

Little feet along my shadowed corridors have crept through  
years;  
Climbed my footworn steps. I sent all your strongest  
forth to fight;  
Out of toil and banishment led them home through storm  
and night;  
Lent defeat a resting place; saw the bearers of your dead;  
Heard the troubled spirit pass shuddering where horror  
led.

Spirit finger tips I felt tapping at a lighted window pane,  
When the year's last snow drifts melted; through the rush  
of winter rain  
Watched my masters staggering, blinded by the fumes of  
sin  
Thresholds bare and cold defiling. Shrinking famine entered in,  
Where pale women whispering, watched my dying embers  
fall.  
I was hungry with their hearts. I have lived and loved it  
all.

Frosts besieged me. One by one winds my outworks  
whipped away;  
Till you wandered round the world, came and claimed me  
yesterday;



Found my shrine of memories, dreamed of children kneeling where  
Moonlight trembling crept to them; made my grayest  
gardens fair;  
Voice to dusty volumes gave, past my crumbling lintels  
stole;  
Let new fire my hearthstones lave: to my body brought a  
soul.

*Shanghai, 1-14-14*

## ENVOY

WE are weak children of a larger day  
That just begins to dawn. How shall we serve,  
Strive to leave something when life ebbs away,  
Stronger than we were, where light's last reserve  
Struggles with midnight through each shaking nerve?

How shall we bring one word that lifts the heart,  
Reveal one vision of a life divine  
Boundless as air we breathe, whose wasted art  
Plays with life's toys behind its battle line?  
How shall we sound here Heaven's countersign?

We have not toiled to lay life's cornerstones,  
Fashioned of steel its bridges that shall last;  
Snatched life from death where the sick city groans.  
We have not sent life's summons speeding fast  
Through wires that thrill all seas and deserts past.

We have not charted stars nor chained the storms;  
Sorted God's atoms for man's triumph new;  
Saw how salvation new in test tubes forms;  
Passed thought's vast armies through today's review;  
Marshalled the leaders of that host for you.

Yet this remains. We have not played with lies,  
Traded the truth, despaired nor doubted long;  
Feared lest man fail at last to scale the skies;

Who dies today, tomorrow grows more strong,  
Out of all agonies of pain and wrong.

We have known life and found her lovelier  
Than stars or roses, sunrise, tender eyes;  
Held in our heart the throbbing heart of her;  
Out of her storms and flames and battle cries,  
Caught one new note of truth that never dies.

8-25-14





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